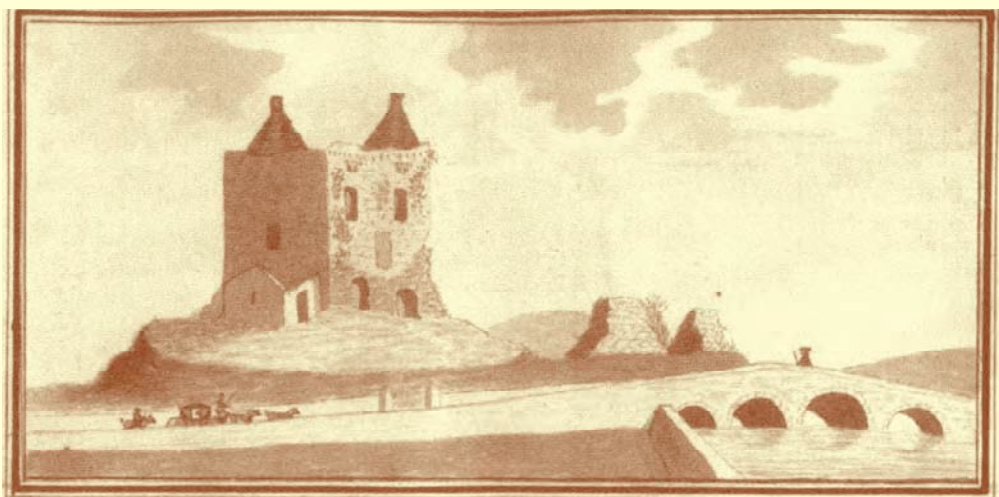


MARIA EDGEWORTH



Castle Rackrent

Edited, with an Introduction, by SUSAN KUBICA HOWARD

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For my parents and my children.

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Introduction

I. Composition, Publication, and Early Reception

In a letter to Mrs. Stark, on September 6, 1834, Maria Edgeworth wrote about the genesis of *Castle Rackrent*, which had been published thirty-four years earlier:

The only character drawn from the life in “Castle Rackrent” is Thady himself, the teller of the story. He was an old steward (not very old, though, at that time; I added to his age, to allow him time for generations of the family)—I heard him when first I came to Ireland, and his dialect struck me, and his character, and I became so acquainted with it, that I could think and speak in it without effort: so that when, for mere amusement, without any ideas of publishing, I began to write a family history as Thady would tell it, he seemed to stand beside me and dictate and I wrote as fast as my pen could go, the characters all imaginary. (Qtd. in *Literary Biography*, 240–1)

Visiting her Aunt Ruxton sometime between 1793 and 1795, Edgeworth apparently entertained her with imitations of her father’s steward, John Langan;¹ Marilyn Butler, Edgeworth’s biographer, suggests Edgeworth composed much of the novel during the period from 1793 to 1796 and that her manner of composition was consistent with her practice throughout her career as a writer: “She did the writing herself, and thought her best work was written quickly” (*Literary Biography*, 290). Edgeworth writes to Mrs. Ruxton, on January 29, 1800, that with *Castle Rackrent* “there was literally not a correction, not an alteration made in the first writing, no copy and as I recollect no interlineations—it went to the press just as it was

1. According to Butler, it was Mrs. Ruxton who suggested Edgeworth embrace the character of Thady and continue with *Castle Rackrent* as a vehicle for his character (*Literary Biography*, 300).

written . . .” (qtd. in *Literary Biography*, 290).² Edgeworth’s letter of 1834 to Mrs. Stark makes it clear that the last section of the novel, dealing with Sir Condy, was written two years after the rest of the novel. The entire novel must have been completed by October of 1798, as the novel in manuscript was with her father’s father-in-law, D. A. Beaufort, at this time. The novel, with Edgeworth’s notes, was sent to Joseph Johnson, the London publisher of such radical writers as William Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft, probably in late 1798 or early 1799. Some critics suggest that Edgeworth wished to hurry the publication of the novel finally, after having hesitated on it for so long, so that it might contribute to the debate over the imminent vote on the union of Britain and Ireland.

The Glossary of the novel was a last-minute addition, composed in 1799 (*Literary Biography*, 354) and hurried to the printer as the novel was going to press; as a result, it appeared in the first edition of the published novel after the Preface, since, as Marilyn Butler points out, “preliminaries were . . . the last part of the book to go to press” (PCR, 5). In all subsequent editions of *Castle Rackrent*, the Glossary appears at the end. Richard Lovell Edgeworth probably contributed to the Glossary; Butler suggests that he wrote the note on wakes, but that Edgeworth was responsible for the note on Irish lawsuits, which she added to the Glossary of the fifth edition of the novel, published in 1810 (*Literary Biography*, 242). The addition of the Glossary to the already completed novel may be explained in several ways: the Edgeworths, having been in England, had a good sense of how the British viewed the Irish on the eve of the vote for a parliamentary union between Britain and Ireland. In a letter from that period, Edgeworth writes: “The commercial and mercantile world in which we have mixed . . . look upon it as madness in the Irish to oppose what they think so advantageous” (qtd. in Butler, “Sources,” 23). Concerned that *Castle Rackrent* not be taken as a slam against the Irish people, their culture, and their history, Edgeworth may have created the Glossary to clarify and expand on cultural phenomena in

2. The first part of the novel may have been composed as early as 1792 if we credit a conversation between Joseph Farington and Captain Francis Beaufort, brother of Edgeworth’s stepmother, in which Beaufort told Farington that the novel was “written eight years before it was published”; Butler discredits this date because Edgeworth was out of the country at that time and unable to visit her aunt (*Literary Biography*, 354, n.1).

the novel in order to better represent the gifts Ireland would bring to a union. In addition, because she persisted in allowing Thady to speak in his own dialect, she may have felt that the language of the Irish needed to be glossed if an English reader were to understand the characters and their concerns; the Glossary provided a place for this. The completed *Castle Rackrent* was published in January 1800. Edgeworth was probably paid £100 for the copyright.³

Because it was an anonymous publication, and a short one at that, and because it was a novel—a genre that, even after a century, was still not viewed with much respect by the literary world—*Castle Rackrent* initially received little critical attention. The critic for the *Monthly Review*, 1800, applauds the humor of the novel as well as its spirit, finding its “pleasing pages” a welcome change from the literature of the moment:

In these Hibernian Memoirs, we have been highly entertained with the exhibition of some admirable pictures, delineated (as we conceive) with perfect accuracy and truth of character; and we apprehend that, from a due contemplation of these portraits, many striking conclusions may be drawn, and applications made, respecting the necessity and probable consequences of an union between the two kingdoms. (Qtd. in Harris, 255)

The reviewer for the *British Critic*, 1800, also finds the novel “a very pleasant, good-humoured, and successful representation of the eccentricities of our Irish neighbours.” This reviewer appreciates Thady as a comic character and finds him “well delineated” (qtd. in Harris, 255). In April 1800, Edgeworth was informed that King George III found her novel amusing and helpful in understanding his Irish subjects (John Cronin, 25), and, in 1805, she learned that William Pitt, the prime minister, praised it (PCR, 1).⁴ In 1801, the third edition of the novel appeared, this one with Edgeworth’s name

3. Edgeworth drew up a list, dated September 1842, which gives the amount she earned from the sale of each of her books (*Literary Biography*, 492).

4. In particular, the king’s comments concerned Edgeworth as she felt she had emphasized in her title and Preface that *Castle Rackrent* was a “tale . . . of other times,” the manners and characters depicted “not those of the present age” (*Literary Biography*, 359).

on the title page (which was the case for all subsequent publications by Edgeworth).

The *British Critic*'s review ended with the assertion that "we are not at all surprised that the publication should, in so very short a time, have passed through two editions" (qtd. in Harris, 255). In fact, *Castle Rackrent*, having gone through three editions in its first two years of publication, went into a fourth London edition in 1804, a fifth in 1810, and a sixth in 1815, which was a reprint of the fifth edition and published by Johnson's successor, Hunter. The novel also appeared in a collected edition of Edgeworth's tales and novels in 1825, and in the collection *Tales and Novels by Maria Edgeworth*, in eighteen volumes, published in London by Baldwin and Cradock in 1832 and containing *Castle Rackrent* in its first volume (this is the version used as the copy-text for the present edition). In addition, there were numerous pirated editions published in Dublin and America, and a German translation in 1802.

II. Historical and Literary Contexts

A. Historical Context

Castle Rackrent is usually viewed as the first regional novel in British literature. Before its publication, no novel had explored the Irish national consciousness with the depth or commitment that this first novel of Edgeworth's does. *Castle Rackrent* offers a depiction of life in a time just before Ireland joined Britain in union, a period of political and social unrest, even open rebellion against the attempts of the government in London to control its "sister nation." While the novel explores the causes and manifestations of this unrest, and takes seriously its commitment to defining the national character of Ireland, it is also focused on the possibility of a future union between Ireland and Britain.

W. E. H. Lecky, the nineteenth-century Irish nationalist historian, notes, "In the history of Ireland . . . we may trace with singular clearness the perverting and degrading influence of great legislative injustices, and the manner in which they affect in turn every element of national well-being" (I, 1). Few would find fault with this view of Ireland under the yoke of British parliamentary control. In order to

extend its dominion, England began establishing plantations in Ireland at the end of the sixteenth century by offering free land to the English and Scottish who were willing to leave their homes to go there. This plan met with little success initially, the plantation at Londonderry, established in 1608, offering a good example of the initial outcome: there, the colonists' efforts to push the Irish natives off the arable land and into the forests failed; the Irish destroyed the settlements and killed the colonists. Eventually England, under Cromwell, responded by sending troops to gain control of the situation and to support the reassignment of lands to new Protestant colonists from England and Scotland, which prompted subsequent retaliation by the native Irish Catholic population (Hechter, 72). Sir John Davies, in his *Historical Tracts*, published in Dublin in 1787, suggests the view the English government took of the Irish they were displacing:

For the husbandman must first break the land before it be made capable of good seed: and when it is thoroughly broken and manured, if he do not forthwith cast good seed into it, it will grow wild again, and bear nothing but weeds. So barbarous a country must first be broken by war, before it will be capable of good government; and when it is fully subdued and conquered, if it be not well planted and governed after the conquest, it will often return to the former barbarism. (Qtd. in Hechter, 76)

During the Restoration, some lands were restored to the Irish Catholics, but these gains were lost for the most part after the war of 1689–1691, when more lands were redistributed to the Anglo-Irish Protestants and legislative measures were passed that supported these new land configurations; “these ‘penal laws’ targeted the residual catholic gentry, and ensured a virtual protestant monopoly over freehold proprietorship until the end of the 18th cent., [making that period] . . . the golden age of the [protestant] ascendancy” (OCBH, 30).

Certainly, in the years leading up to 1782, the period in which the action of *Castle Rackrent* is set, things were bleak in Ireland for many of the Irish who remained, and the grievances that Swift vociferously informed his British as well as Irish readers of in the early decades of the century are those Edgeworth chronicles in her first novel as she traces the story of the Rackrent family through three generations. They included the abuses of absentee landlords; the

devaluing of the Irish currency; the legislated dependency of Ireland on foreign imports and the stress this caused on domestic manufacture; the poverty endemic to the urban areas; the penal laws against the Catholics;⁵ the mismanagement of agriculture, particularly through the enclosure laws, which resulted in poor harvests and the starvation of the Irish peasantry.

Of particular relevance to *Castle Rackrent* was the situation faced by Irish tenants of British absentee landlords during the eighteenth century. As Edgeworth's explanations of terms such as "duty fowls," "duty work," and "weed ashes" in her Glossary to the novel make clear, the relationship between tenants and landlords or their agents in Ireland at this time was complicated, and, in general, the customs favored the landlord and sometimes severely disadvantaged the tenant.⁶ Sir Murtagh and his lady seem intent on squeezing from their tenants every last duty owed them, be it livestock, work, money, or weeds. Their tenants are expected to deliver them their chickens—or "duty fowls," their labor—or "duty work," which often jeopardized the tenants' own farm and crops; their money, as in "sealing money," given to the landlord upon the signing of a lease; even their weeds, or "weed ashes," the soda ash from which revenue could be substantial. The expectations a landlord held of his tenant extended even after the tenant's death, in the form of "heriots," wherein the best livestock of the deceased were given to his landlord at the sale of the deceased's property. In addition to these practices, one can assume that the Rackrents were guilty of one of the most heinous abuses of the time—rackrenting—whereby landlords, absentee or sitting, leased their land at "an exorbitant rate to a series of

5. Many of the penal laws were repealed during the eighteenth century. In 1778, Catholics gained the ability to inherit and sell land; in 1792, they could study law and intermarry with those of other faiths; and, in 1793, the Relief Bill provided that Catholic freeholders could vote, serve in the military, and attend university (Corbett, 2). Still, Catholics were not viewed as equal under the law with Protestants in Ireland, even after the union in 1800.

6. Terry Eagleton, in *Heathcliff and the Great Hunger*, notes that Irish landlords were not "a uniformly rapacious bunch. The historical record, inevitably, is fairly mixed" (60). However, he is blunt in his condemnation of the landowners as a class who "did precious little to justify their privileges. They were a parasitic social formation" (66), and the benignity of some did not mitigate the reality that "while the mass of Irish cottiers, small tenant farmers and landless labourers endured an existence notorious throughout Europe for its spectacular indigence, a paltry number of big landowners owned half the country" (64).

short-term tenants who inevitably fail[ed] and abscond[ed]" (Tracy, 198–9); Hollingworth suggests that "much of Ireland was . . . 'rack-rented' [which insured that] a fixed percentage of the income from the letting went to the landlord" (81).

When Robert Lovell Edgeworth moved his family back to his estate at Edgeworthstown in County Longford, Ireland, in 1782, after having lived for many years in England, he may have been motivated by the "new Irish patriotism and desire for reform" felt by many at this time, suggests Gary Kelly (80). Indeed, some of his early reforms at Edgeworthstown, reforms with which his daughter assisted him, included the ending of such practices as requiring duty work or duty fowl of his tenants; in addition, he attempted to treat his tenants fairly, "offering long leases at fair rent, eliminating subletting and the subdividing of leaseholds into minute uneconomic plots, and recognizing 'tenant right'" (Moynahan, 15–6), or the recognition of the landlord's duty to acknowledge the tenants' improvements to the land, rather than increase their rent. Anthony Cronin notes that among Robert Lovell Edgeworth's improvements to his estate were the building of stone houses for his tenants, his dismissal of bailiffs and middlemen, and his reclamation of bog land and mountainsides. Cronin concludes that he was "paternalist landlordism personified," despite his lack of faith in the abilities of the Anglo-Irish to effectively manage Ireland, and his great respect for the potential of the peasant classes in Ireland to better their country (18–9). This lack of faith did not extend to his daughter, who, from the age of fifteen, served as his estate manager. Her stepmother wrote of Maria's involvement with the estate:

Her father employed her as an agent and accountant; an employment in which she showed marvellous acuteness and patience; it not only gave her habits of business and accuracy, but let her into a familiarity with the modes of thought and terms of expression among the people which she could in no other way have acquired. (Qtd. in Gallagher, 259)

In addition to being the year the Edgeworths returned to Ireland to live,⁷ as well as the year Edgeworth marks in the subtitle of *Castle*

7. Jacqueline Genet notes that the Edgeworths' ancestors had been given land in Ireland by Elizabeth I, but "their extravagance and love of gambling" (66) had caused them to have to leave Ireland and return to England.

Rackrent as the end of her characters' narrative lives, 1782 was also the year that brought legislative independence to Ireland and a sense of renewed hope in the possibility of a strong and dignified national identity for Ireland. This was accomplished through the joint activities of "patriot politicians" inspired by the American Revolution and eager for equal representation for Ireland within Britain's parliament, and a new Whig ministry in London sympathetic to the demands of the Irish politicians and overtaxed by the American Revolution. In the spring of 1782, the Commons accepted patriot Henry Grattan's "amendment to the address to the throne asserting Ireland's constitutional rights," which led to a repeal of Poyning's Law (which, from 1495, had given the English government control of Irish legislation) and to a number of actions that gave the Irish greater (though still ultimately limited) control over their own governance. These included the assertion of judicial independence in the court system for Irish judges and the recognition of the Irish House of Lords as "a court of final appeal" (Connolly, 312). Lecky notes the lack of violence or disorder associated with what he calls "a great revolution" that changed the "whole Constitution of Ireland," an event that Edmund Burke saw as analogous to the English Revolution of 1688 (II, 317), but there were still aspects of Irish independence left unclear, such as what the nature of Irish involvement in British foreign affairs would be. In addition, the final say on Irish bills was still left to the British privy council, which had final veto power. As well, the top powers in Ireland, the lord lieutenant and the chief secretary—Ireland's executive branch—were still answerable to the British cabinet, not the Irish parliament (Connolly, 312). Still, though not as fully liberating as they might have been, the political events of 1782 placated many nationalists in Ireland looking to gain a modicum of political independence from Britain for the present and launch a movement in the direction of full independence as a future aim. Indeed, as Hechter points out, Grattan's Parliament, despite the fact that it was completely Protestant, did achieve for Ireland a "semblance of political sovereignty" (84) and, as Anthony Cronin notes,

[i]nspired [an] . . . extraordinary upsurge of energy and confidence . . . [which could be seen] . . . everywhere in Ireland: . . . in the Georgian streets and squares of the capital; in the great buildings of its centre; in the canals enclosing them

and stretching Westward as engineering miracles across the bogs; in many of the big houses with their attendant demesnes; in the great mills and still-standing granaries of the South-East. It was a time of almost unexampled and unbelievable prosperity, affecting many more sections of the population than those at the very top. (18)

In the last decade of the eighteenth century, up until the vote for union and the publication of *Castle Rackrent*, Ireland was again a country experiencing open rebellion in the face of Britain's efforts to control it from across the water. With the example of the French Revolution fresh in everyone's mind;⁸ unrest due to poor economic conditions in Ireland; tighter political, legal, and military controls; the loss of a moderate, pro-Irish presence in the Irish parliament; the continued unwillingness to grant Ireland's Catholics full emancipation (despite passage of the Relief Bill of 1793, which allowed Irish Catholics to vote for candidates for Irish parliamentary office, bear arms, and enter professions [Moynahan, 7]); and a parliament open to charges of corruption, many Irish people lost hope in the possibility of the reform of the Irish political system, especially as it affected the Irish economy, and became more cunning and "subversive" in their activities (McCormack, 102). These conditions led to the insurrection of 1798, which S. J. Connolly calls the "culmination of the revolutionary activities of the United Irishmen" (260), and which was actually four separate uprisings primarily occurring in May and June of that year. The Society of United Irishmen, formed in 1791 in Belfast and Dublin, was made up of both Protestant and Catholic members of the middle and upper classes whose aim was to reform parliament, acquire full rights for Catholics under the law, and gain independence for Ireland from Britain. They were supported by expectations that France would come to their aid, and, indeed, French forces did land in Ireland in August 1798, but most were turned away. This group, along with the rural Catholic Defenders, was

8. The poor in Ireland had more reason to find hope in the example of the French peasantry's rebellion against authority than any other class in Ireland; the middle and upper classes, Catholic and Protestant, would have seen the French Revolution as a cautionary tale, and the possibility of French aid in the 1798 rebellion as a very real threat, since France had aided the Irish in armed conflicts against British presence in Ireland in the past.

opposed by those loyal to the government as it had evolved after the granting of legislative independence in 1782, i.e., Irish Protestants and Irish landholders, the Orange forces. The government was able to thwart much revolutionary activity, but, as Nicholas Canny notes,

. . . the threats and repressive measures of the militia, and the clear evidence that bigoted Protestants would enjoy a free rein in molesting Catholics, provoked a fresh sense of alarm and alienation among the Catholic rural population. Historians are now agreed that it was this that persuaded the Catholics of County Wexford and some neighboring areas in South Leinster to make common cause with the revolutionaries when a small French force did make a landing in Ireland in 1798. (314)

The revolutionary forces actually captured a number of towns, even setting up a sort of revolutionary government headquarters at Wexford for a number of weeks until government forces retook the town. The rebellion was violent on both sides: the death toll was estimated at 30,000, and the number of those punished by execution, transportation, or flogging amounted to 1,500. It left both sides feeling insecure and disillusioned with governmental controls and protections.

Maria Edgeworth was readying *Castle Rackrent* for publication in 1798 as rebellion took hold of Ireland. Indeed, she was made personally aware of the country's political instability when, on September 4, the rumor that rebel forces, supported by the French, had reached the village of Edgeworthstown caused Edgeworth and her family to leave their home for Longford, a few miles away. As Maria Edgeworth chronicles, their house was saved on this occasion because the housekeeper, who had remained behind, had once lent money to the wife of one of the rebels to pay her rent. Edgeworth writes: "Pike in hand, he had set his back against the gate of the demesne and sworn that 'if he were to die for it the next minute, he would have the life of the first man who should open the gate or set enemy's foot within side of the place'" (*Black Book*, 176). Richard Lovell Edgeworth had earlier "rais[ed] a body of infantry among his tenantry which included Catholics as well as Protestants, an act which seemed little less than rank treason to many of his critics," (*Black Book*, 173) his daughter notes; as the rebels and French came

closer to Longford, Richard Lovell Edgeworth and the men under him prepared to defend the gaol (jail), though his purpose was mistaken by the townspeople who suspected he had “illuminated the gaol to deliver it up to the French” and were ready to “tear him to pieces if they can catch hold of him,” in the housekeeper’s words—this despite the fact that the French and rebels had been beaten at Ballynamuck near Granard by General Lake and his forces, that “fifteen hundred rebels and French were killed, and that the French generals and officers were prisoners” already (177). The “mob,” Maria Edgeworth writes, “had been pelting them [her father and the British officer escorting him] with hard turf, stones and brickbats,” and they were only saved from the Irish townspeople by the British officers who came to their rescue. Richard Lovell Edgeworth returned to his home with his family, where “not a twig [had been] touched nor a leaf harmed” by the Irish Catholic rebels and, examining the damage that had been done in the village, he ordered “that repairs of all his tenants’ houses should be made at his expense” (179); those tenants and servants who had been disloyal to him he banished from the estate.

Out of what Edgeworth referred to as this “stormy year of ’98,” in which the threat from both the Irish native population and the French revealed itself more fully, came the impetus for the Act of Union of 1800, accomplished by the British and Irish parliaments, which led to the creation of the United Kingdom and Ireland in January 1801 and the concomitant dissolution of the Irish parliament in Dublin. Many felt that the union of Britain and Ireland was achieved through corrupt means, through bribery and intimidation (certainly Richard Lovell Edgeworth voted against the union for this very reason), and fueled by British fear of Ireland’s growing nationalism; such a sentiment is reasonable given such statements as the following, made by one of Pitt’s undersecretaries in a 1799 letter:

By giving the Irish a hundred members in an Assembly of six hundred and fifty, they will be impotent to operate upon that Assembly, but it will be invested with Irish assent to its authority. . . . The Union is the only answer to preventing Ireland becoming too great and powerful. (Qtd. in Hechter, 73)

S. J. Connolly argues, however, that the achievement of union was due much more to the effective political campaigning of the

pro-union element in the Irish parliament, and that “the exchange of patronage for parliamentary support remained within the limits of eighteenth-century convention”; Connolly also suggests that “both sides engaged, through pamphleteering, petitions, and public meetings, in a competition for public opinion as well as parliamentary votes” (565). The union was overseen by Pitt and assured Ireland representation in the House of Lords (four bishops, twenty-eight peers) and the House of Commons (one hundred members of parliament). So, in practical terms, the union that Burke called “‘a natural, cheerful alliance’ with Britain” (OCR, ix) might be seen to effect better representation of Irish interests in parliament in London, and equal taxation with Britain (achieved after 1817, when the Irish and British exchequers were joined), as well as to give Ireland the benefit of Britain’s industrial advances at home and resources abroad. Others felt that the union was ultimately a “disaster for two communities, both the Anglo- and native Irish” (Moynahan, 8), as there was still separation between Ireland and Britain as a result of physical distance and size of population, religious conflicts (as a result of George III’s unwillingness to grant Catholic emancipation), and a lack of economic development, as well as political discontent that required that the Irish executive branch—the lord lieutenant and the chief secretary—working out of Dublin Castle be retained.

Edgeworth published *Castle Rackrent* on the eve of the union, without knowing what the outcome would be for the country she looked upon as her home. An Anglo-Irish person, and a political liberal, she, like her father, supported Ireland’s right to independence; as a pragmatist, she recognized the problems facing the Irish population of 1800 because of the issues noted above—economic underdevelopment along with religious and class conflict were substantial hurdles. As Patrick Maume notes, Edgeworth was “acutely aware of the responsibilities of her class and the threats of dispossession it had faced; she personally experienced danger from both rebels and ultra-loyalists during the insurrection of 1798.”⁹ But she was also committed to a modern Ireland, to a movement away from the abuses of the kind depicted in *Castle Rackrent*, in the years prior to 1782.

9. Qtd. in Connolly, 168.

B. Literary Context

Gary Kelly writes that Edgeworth was “the best-known novelist in Britain from 1800 until the publication of Sir Walter Scott’s *Waverley* in 1814” (78), and credits her with developing the twin subgenres of the novel of manners and the sentimental novel, as practiced in the late eighteenth century by Frances Burney, Henry Mackenzie, and others, into the national novel. Indeed, in the General Preface to his magnum opus edition of the *Waverley* novels, published between 1829 and 1833, Scott credits Edgeworth with doing more through her writing for the success of the union between Ireland and Britain than any lawmaker. He extolls the “rich humour, pathetic tenderness, and admirable tact which pervade” her works; in *Waverley* he had hoped to do for Scotland what Edgeworth had “so fortunately achieved for Ireland, something which might introduce her natives to those of the sister kingdom,¹⁰ in a more favourable light than they had been placed hitherto, and tend to procure sympathy for their virtues and indulgence for their foibles” (xiii). What Scott learned from Edgeworth’s works, and from *Castle Rackrent* in particular, was how to write about “what made the Irish unlike the English” in a way that was positive and intriguing (Tracy, 210), to write about Ireland as a subject, not a “scenic backdrop” (Eagleton, 175).

Aside from writers of the gothic—principally Ann Radcliffe, whose novels compelled readers of the 1790s, but whose influence by 1800 had waned¹¹—late-eighteenth-century women writers were accepted as “miniaturists,” writers of domestic fictions (PCR, 3), not generally as novelists of national scope. Burney was the major writer of this type of fiction, though she was moving in a quite different direction with her last novel, *The Wanderer*, her most politically charged, least domestic, and most negatively reviewed novel, which she began writing at the same time Edgeworth was writing *Castle Rackrent*, but which was not published until 1814. Jane Austen, though she began writing in the last decade of the eighteenth century,

10. Eagleton suggests that Britain saw its relationship to Ireland metaphorically not as sisters, but as mother and child (128), with no hint of the equality Scott suggests.

11. In her choice of title for her first novel, Edgeworth does tap into the popularity of the gothic craze of the last quarter of the eighteenth century that went well beyond literary boundaries. McCormack notes, for instance, that many Irish “Big Houses” were actually made into gothic castles—“gothi-cized”—and the term “castle” applied to them (113).

would not begin to publish her novels until 1811, and then she would become known as the woman who worked wonders with “a fine brush” on a “little bit (two inches wide) of Ivory,”¹² rather than as the ironist we recognize her as today.

Edgeworth probably has more in common with Charlotte Lennox and Susan Ferrier than with Austen, though Lennox had published her final novel, *Euphemia*, in 1790, and Ferrier would not publish her first novel, *Marriage*, until 1818. Like Edgeworth, both Lennox and Ferrier set novels in colonized countries—in Lennox’s case, her first¹³ and last novels were both partially set in colonial America, c. 1740, a place about which she had firsthand knowledge, having lived in New York State as a girl, and Scottish-born Ferrier set her novels at least partially in post-union Scotland. Both Lennox and Ferrier chose settings that complemented the perspectives of their female characters, which allowed their readers to glimpse the situations of the marginalized, the disenfranchised, and the Other, whether they were Native Americans, African American slaves, unhappily married women, the Scottish poor, or the Scottish among the English. Lennox prepared the way for Edgeworth’s overt politicization of the domestic realm in *Castle Rackrent*, with its colonial setting and its servant narrator, in *Euphemia*’s epistolary form that allows the voices of two women to carry across the Atlantic to mark the differences in their experiences from the men whose stories have been more plentiful, and about subjects more grandiose than the domestic concerns of wives and mothers, sisters and daughters, who only inhabit the colonized landscape because men have decided they should follow them into foreign places. With *Marriage*, Ferrier follows Edgeworth in giving her readers a novel in which the narrative entertains them with information about Scottish customs, manners, landscapes, and character,¹⁴ and suggests the alienation a woman born in Scotland can feel in England, despite the fact that the two countries had been officially united for more than one hundred years.

12. Qtd. in Drabble, 52. Austen described herself in this way—perhaps facetiously, perhaps not—in a letter to J. Edward Austen in 1816.

13. *The Life of Harriot Stuart, Written by Herself*, was published in 1750 by London publishers Payne and Bouquet.

14. Horatio Krans notes that, like Austen, Ferrier and Edgeworth “wrote novels that embodied the same ideals, and treated of the everyday life of average humanity” (273).

In the particular narrative technique she uses in *Castle Rackrent*, the memoir-novel bound with a strong editorial presence, Edgeworth reveals her debt to Defoe and Richardson, both of whom had experimented earlier in the eighteenth century with combining a strong narrative voice—Robinson Crusoe’s, Moll Flanders’, Pamela’s—with an editor’s oversight, either in a preface to the narrative or in footnotes. While her use of this technique suggests Edgeworth’s works are situated on a firm eighteenth-century novelistic foundation,¹⁵ her valuation in *Castle Rackrent* of common language and subjects, of what she calls in her Preface Thady’s “plain unvarnished tale,” resembles the defining characteristic of Wordsworth and Coleridge’s *Lyrical Ballads*—published two years before and inaugurating the Romantic movement in literature¹⁶—and allows us to see that she also had her finger on the pulse of the times.

Castle Rackrent, as a novel set in Ireland and written in English at the beginning of the nineteenth century by a Protestant, Anglo-Irish gentlewoman, has often been read within an “Anglo-Irish tradition of ‘Big-House’ fiction” (John Cronin, 25) and deals with themes seen in other nineteenth-century Anglo-Irish literature: “landownership, the relationship between landlord and tenants, and how the fates of both depended on the way the land was managed” (Sloan, 3). Moynahan, who defines Anglo-Irish literature as “the writing produced by that ascendant minority in Ireland, largely but not entirely English in point of origin, that tended to be Protestant and overwhelmingly loyal to the English crown, and had its power and privileges secured by the English civil and military presence” (4), sees Maria Edgeworth as “the true begetter of the Anglo-Irish literary line” and *Castle Rackrent* as its “first masterpiece” (12). Some critics suggest it was written primarily for “the English public in the absence of any large potential Irish market” (Lloyd, 131; Flanagan, 42), especially

15. George Watson suggests that, while Edgeworth uses this “oldest of novel techniques in the eighteenth century,” unlike *Robinson Crusoe*, *Castle Rackrent*’s narrator is not the “central actor in the drama” (xvi). Other critics would disagree with this assessment of Thady’s centrality.

16. Frances Botkin speaks for many modern critics of *Castle Rackrent* in recognizing Edgeworth’s novel as the first British novel in dialect (141). Ullrich notes parallels between the Preface to *Lyrical Ballads* and Edgeworth’s *Castle Rackrent*, especially in the idea that words “of a ‘gossip’ are psychologically transparent, approximate truth” (93, n.2).

as the possibility of union would have made English readers want to know more about Ireland and Irish society (Flanagan, "Nature," 43). Some critics argue that the audience for the novel is other Anglo-Irish landowners, whom Edgeworth wishes to teach the lesson of wise management (Tracy, 204). While the economic realities of the literary marketplace and the economic importance of good land management cannot be ignored, I am more persuaded by Botkin's claim that Edgeworth "addressed readers of diverse ages and classes. Conscious that she wrote for the English, the Irish, and the Anglo-Irish, she took care to engage them all without overt offense" (142). Certainly, Edgeworth's editor remarks at the conclusion of *Castle Rackrent* that "the domestic habits of no nation in Europe were less known to the English than those of their sister country, till within these few years" (64), and the audience's being "cultural . . . outsiders" (Ferris, 121) would explain Edgeworth's decision to include a Glossary in *Castle Rackrent*; but while the Glossary may be taken at face value as a somewhat condescending aid to understanding a foreign culture, it—like so much else in the novel—operates on other levels, in ways that allow readers from varied backgrounds and with diverse perspectives to engage with the novel. Flanagan defines Irish literature as "rooted in Irish life and experience, a literature which often forces us to turn for elucidation to the thought and culture of Ireland" (50). This is what *Castle Rackrent* does; this is what makes it a novel of Ireland.

In this regard, *Castle Rackrent* is a truly republican text, radical in its choice of subject matter: a country that had been little valued, and then only for its economic resources, not its people, their culture, history, or traditions. Even Edgeworth's choice of language suggests this. As MacDonagh notes, "By 1801 . . . only one half of the population was monolingually Irish-speaking. Fifty years later this proportion had fallen to five percent, and less than twenty-five percent of Irish people could even speak the [Gaelic] language" (*The Nineteenth-Century Novel*, 104). He suggests this is because, in order to survive in the modern world, where English was for all practical purposes the language of law, government, literature, and trade, and Gaelic "had become associated with ignorance, indigence, struggle and distress" (104), the people of Ireland moved of their own accord away from Gaelic. Especially important for a novel with political potential, "the language of agitation was almost invariably English" (104), and, ironically, it was the Protestant Anglo-Irish

population in Ireland that from the late eighteenth-century onward perpetuated interest in Gaelic culture—beginning with the Royal Irish Academy in 1785, which Richard Lovell Edgeworth helped found, in order to support the study of Gaelic culture and language. Nor was Edgeworth alone in using English rather than Gaelic in her novels; John Cronin notes that most early-nineteenth-century novels written in Ireland contain “footnotes or afternotes packed with details of regional explication” (11), and Sloan observes that the novel genre only gained ground in Ireland “after the English language had superseded the native Irish” (3). Rather than a denial of Irish national identity, Edgeworth’s use of the English language may be seen as a practical means to promote that identity, and the use of dialect an effort to suggest a national identity in a realistic, accessible manner—not only to English or Anglo-Irish readers, but also to Irish readers, most of whom had turned or were turning to English as their world changed.

III. Unions

Edgeworth published *Castle Rackrent* with the goal of making Ireland better known to Britain and to itself in order to foster a truer understanding between the two countries that recognized the discrete national identities each brought to such a union. To this end, Edgeworth considered the nature of the family and how it can be seen as a mirror for larger national unions. She explored in *Castle Rackrent* how families function; how the individual works within a family; how the family defines itself over time, through generations; and what forces create, alter, or destroy family unity, as a means to better understanding how these issues translate to the national scene.

Castle Rackrent considers the notion of the extended family that prevailed during the eighteenth century—the idea that “family” included not only the nuclear family, but, in addition, servants, visitors, and wards (dependents of any kind), who were viewed as kin. Thady Quirk, servant to three generations of Rackrents, identifies himself as a member of the Rackrent household when he tells a stranger that he does not belong to Sir Condy, but lives under him, implying a relationship of recipient to benefactor, rather than servant

to master. Dáithí O. hÓgáin suggests that Thady's sense of connection to the Rackrents stems from "a mutually respected tradition" that yields a shared identity, despite differences in class (64). This helps to explain, as well, why Thady may use a peasant's vocabulary and phrasing, but expresses with these the "sensibility" of an aristocrat (Colgan, 59–60). And yet, what does identifying with the Rackrents mean? They are a family whose original name was O'Shaughlin, but who begrudgingly accept "the surname and arms of Rackrent" in order to fulfill the condition of the will of the late Sir Tallyhoo Rackrent, their cousin, and inherit his estate. In doing so, they forsake their Celtic ancestry and, it is assumed, their Catholic religion.¹⁷ Unfortunately, having begun at such a low moral point with the reader, the Rackrents—through three generations—do little that causes them to rise in the reader's estimation. Sir Patrick is physically unattractive and an alcoholic. His son, Sir Murtagh, cuts out on his father's debts after Sir Patrick dies (while drinking), bleeds his tenants dry, litigates against his neighbors, marries a woman as self-centered and mean spirited as himself, and dies during an argument with her over money. Because he and his wife are childless, something they have in common with other owners of the Rackrent estate, past and future, the estate goes to Sir Murtagh's younger brother, Sir Kit, whose attitude toward money is more like his father's than his brother's in that he lives the good life at his tenant's expense, with not a care for the estate or his retainers. He marries a rich woman, a Jewess, in order to infuse money into the vastly depleted estate, and when she will not part with her diamond cross, he locks her up in her room for years. The servants and the larger community all know she is being held against her will, but no one does a thing for her. She is foreign, and female, and therefore the abuse she suffers at the hands of her husband goes unchallenged.

We see these three Rackrent masters through the eyes of Thady, who, in true bardic fashion, chronicles the Rackrent family fortunes by putting the best face on their exploits. He makes many excuses for their bad behaviors, to the point of blaming their wives or

17. Terry Eagleton suggests that Edgeworth needed to make the Rackrents "an old Gaelic family" and not an Anglo-Irish one because she could not give a negative portrayal of those who would lead Ireland into union and prosperity (164). Colgan calls them "an ancient Gaelic Catholic family with the status and privileges of the Protestant Anglo-Irish" (60).

employees for their moral depravities. His dependence on them motivates him to maintain a fantasy of his masters' beneficence. Despite this, his narrative reveals the inadequacy of Rackrent family relationships: between father and son, brother and brother, husband and wife, master and servant, and landlord and tenant, there is no bond of love holding the Rackrent household together, and, by the end of this first half of the novel, the Rackrent estate is as desolate and ill kept as the Rackrent sense of commitment to family. This is underlined by the fact that, after Sir Patrick's marriage, the marriages that follow are childless and, therefore, issueless. The Rackrent line is kept going artificially for a time, but even O'Shaughlins, descendants of kings, cannot make it viable, and actually contribute to its demise.

The second half of the novel depicts Sir Condry Rackrent's life, and, here, rather than a clear satiric portrait of the worst the gentry had to offer, we are given a pathetic portrait of a man who was "a remote branch" of the Rackrent family, who had been born with no fortune but fed by Thady on stories of this distant Rackrent family and supported in the view that he could one day expect to inherit Castle Rackrent and therefore needed no professional training. Sir Condry is well liked by neighbor and tenant alike; he marries for love an extravagant and naïve young woman who is not mean spirited in her relationship with her husband, only disillusioned and damaged by their time together. In addition, he is seemingly Thady's golden boy, more his son than is Thady's own son, Jason, in point of shared affection, loyalty, and emotional dependency. Unlike the other Rackrents before him, it is Sir Condry who is ultimately taken advantage of, his hospitality abused, his good nature exploited, and his closest affections betrayed in the course of the second half of the novel.

The role Thady plays in Sir Condry's downfall is interestingly ambiguous and is directly related to the extent to which Thady may finally have placed his feelings for family—*his* family—above his loyalty to "*the* family," the Rackrents. Jason manages to worm his way into the Rackrent estate through his intimate knowledge of the estate and the failings of its owners. As readers, we do not know how much knowledge Thady has of Jason's maneuverings nor how supportive he is of Jason's gradual infiltration of the Rackrent estate, but we can surmise that Jason's information must have come from his father. While Thady's niece, Judy, accuses him of being an unnatural father in preferring Sir Condry to his own son, it is Thady who betrays Sir Condry, albeit seemingly unconsciously, to the stranger

who represents Sir Condy's creditors. For all his resemblance to the figure of the Irishman in eighteenth-century British political cartoons, a "droll and politically innocent peasant, who delivered Irish bulls¹⁸ with feckless abandon, . . . amused English tourists with his endless flow of illogical talk . . . [and] apparent indifference to or ignorance of the nationalist cause" (Curtis, xxi-xxii), as many critics have pointed out, Thady, in his knowledge of the law and the estate, is anything but stupid (John Cronin, 31). Newcomer notes that there are suggestions in the narrative that Thady is a realist, that his judgments of his employers are not always complimentary, and that he may not be as "simple-minded, or self-deluded, or ingenuous" as he appears (81). For instance, in describing Jason's plans for acquiring first the hunting lodge on the Castle Rackrent estate, and then the lands and the house itself, Thady uses the plural pronoun; he uses the phrase "my son, Jason" especially at times when Jason is wreaking ruin on the Rackrents. C  il  n Owens suggests that, as in the Irish bull, Thady is not uninterested in Jason's usurpation of the Rackrents, and in fact aids it, while masking his intent with a show of loyalty to the Rackrents (72). This ambiguous nature of his relationships with his family and the Rackrent family is inherent in Thady Quirk's very name. Michael Neill argues that a "quirk" would have been understood by Edgeworth and her contemporaries to be "a verbal trick, subtlety, shift or evasion; a quibble, quibbling argument" (87), which he suggests referred "precisely to those crafty and cunning 'shifts' . . . [which have been viewed] as the characteristic technique of Irish subversion—or to the mode of evasive double-speak which ironic readings discover in the pious presentations of Thady" (88). In addition, according to Robert Tracy, Thady is "Teague or Teig, in Irish *Tadhg*, . . . Anglo-Ireland's general name for any Irishman after about 1640; later Teague became the generic name for an Irish man-servant," and, as early as the seventeenth century, Teague was associated with being Irish, Catholic, and dangerous. Tracy contends that "Thady's name, then, carries a hint of its sinister and conspiratorial associations. But, at the same time, . . . on the English stage [Teague had come to be associated with] . . . the loyal servant who follows his master in adversity" (202). Edgeworth could have

18. C  il  n Owens notes that the "Irish bull" is "a general term for a variety of rhetorical tropes in which sense is cunningly encased in apparent nonsense" (72).

assumed her English and Irish readers would have been aware of these various conflicting connotations, and may have seen Thady as both the symbol of the loyal retainer and the scion of the rising, self-oriented middle class.

The relationship between the new order and the old is not a comfortable one in *Castle Rackrent*, but the two show many points of comparison. While the aristocratic family through three generations does not exactly embody family harmony, neither does the Quirk family as it moves from lower- to upper-class status in one generation. The clearest example of the similarity between the two is the image of Jason at the Rackrent lodge—which he gets “for him and his heirs for ever” (37)—and then in *Castle Rackrent* itself, as a self-made man, upwardly mobile, successful, but alone, having distanced himself from his family and his religion,¹⁹ spouseless, childless, and seeking union with no one. This is the old story of the Rackrents, the one Thady tells over and over again in *Castle Rackrent*, of people who continually cut themselves off from others out of greed, egotism, and lack of self-control—what the Anglo-Irish gentry of the past were viewed as; in Jason, the exemplar of the new man, there is essentially and rather surprisingly simply a continuance of the old story that may suggest, as Lloyd contends, that Edgeworth recognized the growing ascendancy of the middle class in Ireland, saw that it would overthrow the aristocracy, but did not believe it could provide a middle ground, a resolution to division within the country, which is why the ending of the novel is so “problematic” (141). Family unity in this novel is not easy, whole, or final. If the reader is to find the promise of union fulfilled at all in *Castle Rackrent*, it is to the narrative structure that she or he must look.

There are many parallels between Thady’s story of the Rackrent family’s abuse of—and attempts to keep—the estate, and the story of Edgeworth’s own ancestors’ equally inept though ultimately successful efforts to hold onto theirs in *The Black Book of Edgeworthstown*. The work chronicles the often self-centered and self-destructive actions of the Edgeworth gentry from 1585, when they came to Ireland from England as part of the planting of Ireland. But

19. John Cronin argues that, like the O’Shaughlin-Rackrents, Jason too has probably conformed to the state religion, Protestantism, in order to escape the punitive penal laws that disallowed Catholics from professional training in the law until the 1792 Catholic Relief Act (32–3).

The Black Book also tells the story of Edmond MacBrián Ferrall, who is described by the narrator, Maria Edgeworth's grandfather, Richard Edgeworth, writing in the 1760s, as "a menial servant of John Edgeworth and a Papist," whose ancestors, the O'Farrells, had owned the land prior to the Edgeworths' settling on it.²⁰ When the Catholic rebels stormed the castle at Cranalagh, not far from Edgeworthstown, on October 23, 1641, MacBrián Ferrall, in his master's absence, helped his mistress to escape and saved the house by convincing the mob to show some respect for an estate in which the portrait of a Catholic ancestor, Jane Tuite Edgeworth, was "painted on the wainscot with her beads and crucifix" (13). In addition, MacBrián Ferrall, while "seeming as zealous and forward as possible in assisting" (12) the rebels in their violence toward the Edgeworths, claimed his master's son as his own reward and, in the guise of the child's murderer, actually managed to get the boy to the safety of a relation in Dublin. Richard Edgeworth writes: "Thus by the fidelity of this poor Irishman, which got the better even of the false notions which the priests had inculcated and which they bound all their followers to obey under pain of damnation, to spare neither man, woman nor child of the heretics, the child was saved and restored to his friend" (13).

Interestingly, this story was told to the narrator not only by his uncles and aunts and by Lady Edgeworth, but also by Simpson, who had been footboy to John Edgeworth, the absent master of the estate, in 1641; Simpson was 11 years old at the time of the event, but 107 at the time of the telling of the story in 1737. The narrator, Richard Edgeworth, says of him: "His understanding and memory seemed perfect, though he was not quite sincere or ingenuous in all his relations," and "he smelt like new-dug earth" (13–4). If *The Black Book of Edgeworthstown* plays any part as a source for

20. Marilyn Butler notes that Richard Edgeworth (1701–1770) wrote *The Black Book of Edgeworthstown* "from family papers; complete with legal documents, it is available in the National Library of Ireland." She also writes that Francis Edgeworth, an English lawyer who had married Irish Catholic Jane Tuite, bought an estate at Cranalagh "when it came on the market as part of an official reapportionment in 1619. . . . Francis Edgeworth and others like him benefited from this second wave of anti-baronial modernization: big Old Irish or Old English estates were reduced in size as new gentlemen-farmers from further east or from England were introduced as improvers" ("Edgeworth's Ireland," 271).

Castle Rackrent (and many Edgeworth scholars contend that it does²¹), the model for Thady can be either Edmond MacBrian Ferrall or Simpson; the heroic, selfless servant, or the somewhat insincere, disingenuous former footboy with the good memory, whose story is worth telling both because it details the heroic action of a servant and because it is a part of the story of the estate—how it was saved from ruin in 1641 by a Catholic servant, despite the best efforts of an irresponsible Protestant owner to lose it. Or perhaps, as Marilyn Butler suggests, Thady has to be seen as occupying two positions as a servant: the one menial, self-serving, and cunning, and the other heroic, loyal, and selfless (PCR, 14–5)—one as the morally derelict consequence of a corrupt class system, and the other as the best side of a man. Or perhaps it is that within Thady, as within most people, be they servant or master, there is the potential to act well or ill. As Terry Eagleton notes, many servants were disloyal in 1798, as in 1641—the Edgeworths experienced this firsthand—and Thady *is* ineffective in defending the estate against the Catholic threat—his son Jason acquires the estate in the end—but to expect his disloyalty, his duplicity, would be a mistake in Edgeworth’s view. Certainly, Edmond MacBrian Ferrall’s fellow Catholics were taken in by his murderous ruse. They expected his loyalty to their shared class and religion, but he acted differently—perhaps not out of loyalty to John Edgeworth’s “full-blooded ‘anglicization’ of social relations” (Eagleton, 165), but to himself as a man who could not see a child murdered before him. For him, personal integrity and perhaps family loyalty—loyalty to the family he may, like Thady, have considered himself a part of—were more significant at that moment than class or religious affiliation.

Maria Edgeworth is clearly concerned with family structures and the relationship of the family to the estate in *Castle Rackrent*, with how personal unions on a smaller scale come into being and serve as bridges to national unions. In *Castle Rackrent*, a bridge, or border identity, is achieved by the novel itself: by its combination of Thady’s story with the editor’s Glossary and notes, which provide an integration of Irish and Anglo sensibilities with the blurring of the generic boundaries. Timothy Brennan writes that the novel, in its

21. See Moynahan, 22–3; McCormack, 103–5; Butler, “Edgeworth’s Ireland,” 271–2.

objectification of “the nation’s *composite* nature . . . allowed people to imagine the special community that was the nation” (51, 49). In the novel, the disparate elements—the strands of narrative, of a nation—are brought together to form a whole; even if this whole is problematic, ambiguous, confusing, and lacking resolution, it gives a truer sense of the forces in tension with one another and the resultant realistic complexity of experience. Edgeworth accomplishes this integration by allowing space for the voices of both the colonized and colonizer, indicting the past history of colonization by the very fact that the editor in *Castle Rackrent*—“rational, professional, and English”—must mediate Thady’s voice—“oral, premodern, and ‘racially’ different”—because it is inadequate to the task of representing the experience it strives to chronicle for the audiences who need to hear it, who will most benefit from the narrative (Perera, 16).²² And yet, as Brian Caraher suggests, one can see that “Edgeworth’s use of dialect privileges the Irish voice by permitting it to compete at least proportionately with the English editorial voice” (151). In addition, Caraher contends, “While some of the glossary notes are apparently critical of the Irishness within the text, others disparage the Englishness that surrounds it” (152). For instance, the editor judges the time the Irish spend attending wakes as excessive in the Glossary. He suggests that “Those who value . . . nations in proportion to their adherence to ancient customs, will, doubtless, admire the Irish *Ullaloo*, and the Irish nation . . .” (69), but that Edgeworth found this custom questionable, and the Irish who adhered to such a custom misled, seems obvious. But, then, she is also critical of the editor’s condescending tone.

In addition to giving information about the culture and traditions of Ireland to “the ignorant English reader,” one of the main purposes of the Glossary was to provide definitions for the Hiberno-English phrases used by Thady. As Julian Moynahan explains, these include

22. Willa Murphy goes further in suggesting that the Glossary is a “kind of supervisor of a potentially dangerous text” (50) and points to Richard Lovell Edgeworth’s surveillance inventions, which she says were created out of a distrust of his tenants and the Irish rebels. While it is reasonable to see colonialism and the penal laws as having created “a culture of concealment in Ireland,” a slyness and duplicity among the rural Irish natives as well as the Anglo-Irish in response (Neill, 77), I see the Glossary more as functioning to mediate than to supervise Thady’s narrative, because the spirit of *Castle Rackrent* does not seem to me to be crippled by fearfulness.

“native terms for which there are no English equivalents, . . . English terms that carry a different meaning” in Ireland, and grammatical issues, where Hiberno-English differs from standard English (28). Bill Ashcroft et al. point out that, despite the glosses, the very inclusion of untranslated words indicates there is a difference, “an unbridgeable separation” between cultures, and strategies set up to bridge the gap instead draw attention to it: An “absence . . . lies at the point of interface between the two cultures” (58). The whole that comes into being through the addition of framing elements integrated with Thady’s narrative is made problematic by this hole, this absence to which Edgeworth can only draw attention by uniting the Irish narrative with the English editor, and hoping the reader is impelled to confront the problem and do something to resolve it. In admitting that Thady is “not consistently lovable” (PCR, 10), Marilyn Butler suggests that Thady’s self-interest subverts a sentimental response. And yet, I would not go so far as to say that the “‘Editor’ is the hero in the text,” as Gary Kelly contends (84). Indeed, *Castle Rackrent* is about lack—lack of sentimental focus, lack of heroic figures, lack of shared cultural experience, and lack of unified perspective and voice to describe it. What the gloss reveals is the gap in understanding between the two languages and cultures, suggests Ashcroft (61–2), who sees dialectical speech such as Thady’s as a means of forcing the reader “into an active engagement with the horizons of the culture in which these terms have meaning” (65). Such active engagement is a first step toward facing the reality of the gap between the two cultures and determining whether it can and should be traversed. *Castle Rackrent* introduces British readers to a different place, people, culture, and dialect, in order to prompt them to recognize a definition of union that incorporates difference rather than obliterates or denies it;²³ for Irish readers, the novel reminds them of an Ireland that existed in the past, one upon which their present identity can be based but from which it must differ, whether or not they accept a union with Britain, and whether or not that acceptance is lasting.

23. Leith Davis, in *Acts of Union*, also suggests that the “concept of national identity” in eighteenth-century Britain was based not on homogeneity . . . but on difference” (5).

Note on the Text

This edition uses as its copy-text the edition of the novel last revised by its author. As my copy-text for *Castle Rackrent*, I am using the 1832 edition of the novel published by London publishers Baldwin and Cradock in the first volume of the eighteen-volume collection *Tales and Novels*, because it was the last edition for which Edgeworth oversaw revisions (the Publisher's Advertisement for this series claims that all eighteen volumes have "undergone a careful Revision and Correction by the Author herself" [viii]). The extent of Edgeworth's revisions of *Castle Rackrent* throughout its career seems to have been limited. The first Dublin edition was a reprint of the London first edition, with minor variations in spelling. The third edition, published in London in 1801, was the first to have Edgeworth's name on the title page; it contained a few corrections to the first edition. The fourth edition was published in 1804 and the fifth in 1810, with additions made to the Glossary (principally a note on family lawsuits in Ireland) and the footnotes deleted.¹ A collected edition of Edgeworth's shorter works was published in 1825, and a second collected edition in 1832–1833. George Watson notes that this second collection—the one from which I have chosen my copy-text of *Castle Rackrent*—is superior to the first since a number of minor corrections were made in the 1832–1833 edition, including changes in spelling, simplified punctuation, and a reduction in the number of dashes (OCR2, xxxviii). Butler notes that Edgeworth was "invited to correct" the novel for the 1832 publication of *Tales and Novels*, and that she did so by eradicating some "tenacious errors" and making "minor . . . alterations" (PCR, 55).²

1. Butler writes that "When a fifth edition of *Castle Rackrent* was proposed in 1810, [Richard Lovell] Edgeworth wanted Maria to bring it up to date with a section to be called 'Anecdotes of Jason McQuirk's family since 1782'" (*Literary Biography*, 277). Edgeworth wrote to her stepbrother, Charles Sneyd Edgeworth, that she was afraid that "in this instance *additions* will not according to the Irish usage of the word be synonymous with improvements," (*Literary Biography*, 277) and indeed, she does not do what her father wishes her to do on this occasion.

2. Penguin's 1992 edition of the novel, edited by Marilyn Butler, also uses the 1832 edition of the novel as its copy-text; Oxford University Press's 1995 edition, edited by

In this edition, I have retained inconsistencies in spelling as they occur in the novel. I have silently emended the copy-text of the novel in the following cases:

1. When there is an obvious printing or spelling error;
2. When keeping the punctuation as it is would cause confusion for the reader:
 - a. This means that, on occasion, where no end punctuation follows a hyphen but an uppercase letter does, indicating the beginning of a new sentence, I have added end punctuation, unless the situation occurs in a piece of dialogue where the breathless quality suggested by a hyphen, and no end punctuation between the hyphen and the beginning of the next sentence, is appropriate;
 - b. ,) becomes), and .) becomes). In addition, the comma preceding the parenthesis is dropped;
 - c. Single quotation marks become double because of the necessity of being able to follow the dialogue;
3. I have capitalized the first letter of a word when it follows end punctuation; I have regularized capitalization of all honorifics such as “Sir,” “Lady,” and so forth throughout *Castle Rackrent* where the practice was haphazard and distracting; and I have left “Mr” “Dr” “Mrs” “St” without punctuation, as these were contractions in the eighteenth century, not abbreviations;
4. In the first edition of the novel, the Glossary Edgeworth added to *Castle Rackrent* as it was being brought to press appeared after the Preface; in the second edition, also dated 1800, and in all editions following, the Glossary was placed at the end of the novel. In this edition, Edgeworth’s notes, which appeared as footnotes, are now treated as endnotes, and the Glossary appears after the novel and before the notes;
5. I have attempted to simulate particular stylistic aspects of the copy-text where possible. I have regularized the length of the long dash used between and at the end of sentences, and in place of names in the novel.

George Watson with an introduction by Kathryn Kirkpatrick, uses the first London edition of the novel (1800) as its copy-text.

Note on the Text

I have annotated the novel with an eye to providing an undergraduate reader with the tools to read this edition as easily and fully as possible, and a more advanced reader the sources to go further in-depth with his or her inquiries. To that end, I have translated foreign phrases and suggested ways in which the allusions in the novel illuminate themes and concerns within the work. My annotations are given as footnotes, as they more immediately and accessibly clarify for a modern reader aspects of the text that Edgeworth may treat in her glosses from a nineteenth-century perspective. Edgeworth's notes and Glossary follow the edited text. If an item in the text appears in the author's notes, this will be indicated in the novel with a lower-case roman numeral. Items discussed in Edgeworth's Glossary are so noted in the text with a superscript "G." In compiling the annotations, I have consulted a number of reference works and editions of the novel; a list of these sources, with abbreviations, follows. I wish to note my gratitude to the modern editors of *Castle Rackrent*, especially Marilyn Butler, and George Watson; their work significantly informs this edition.

Abbreviations for Works Consulted for Annotations

- AHD* *The American Heritage Dictionary*, 3rd ed. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1992.
- BH* Brooke-Little, J. P., ed. *Boutell's Heraldry*. London: Frederick Warne, 1970.
- CBD* Thorne, J. O., and T. C. Collocott, eds. *Chambers Biographical Dictionary*. Revised ed. Edinburgh: Chambers, 1986.
- CCE* *Concise Columbia Encyclopedia*, 3rd ed. New York: Columbia University Press, 1994.
- CGBD* Chalmers, Alexander, ed. *General Biographical Dictionary*, new ed. 32 vols. New York: AMS, 1969.
- DIF* Grehan, Ida. *Dictionary of Irish Family Names*. Boulder, CO: Roberts Rinehart, 1997.
- EB* *New Encyclopedia Britannica*, 15th ed. 29 vols. Chicago, IL: Encyclopedia Britannica, 2003.
- HEP* Greene, John. *History of the English People*. 4 vols. New York: Harper, 1880.
- LCD* Illingworth et al., eds. *Larousse Compact Dictionary*, 2nd ed. New York: Larousse, 2001.
- LED* Traupman, John C. *Latin and English Dictionary*. Revised ed. New York: Bantam, 1995.
- MI* Foster, R. F. *Modern Ireland, 1600–1972*. New York: Penguin, 1989.
- NA* Abrams, M. H. et al., eds. *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, 7th ed. Vol. 1. New York: W. W. Norton, 2000.
- OCBH* Cannon, John, ed. *Oxford Companion to British History*. Revised ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.
- OCEL* Drabble, Margaret, ed. *Oxford Companion to English Literature*. Revised ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.
- OCIH* Connolly, S. J., ed. *Oxford Companion to Irish History*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.

Abbreviations for Works Consulted for Annotations

- OCIH2 Connolly, S. J., ed. *Oxford Companion to Irish History*, 2nd ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.
- OCR Watson, George, ed. *Castle Rackrent*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964.
- OCR2 Watson, George, ed. *Castle Rackrent*. Introduction by Kathryn J. Kirkpatrick. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995.
- OED *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed. 20 vols. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989.
- PCR Butler, Marilyn, ed. *Castle Rackrent*. London: Penguin, 1992.
- RE Benet, William Rose. *Reader's Encyclopedia*, 2nd ed. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1965.
- RS Evans, G. Blakemore et al., eds. *The Riverside Shakespeare*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1974.
- SHI Ranelagh, John O'Bierne. *Short History of Ireland*, 2nd ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.
- SOI MacLysaght, Edward. *Surnames of Ireland*. Shannon, Ireland: Irish University Press, 1969.
- WD *Webster's College Dictionary*, 3rd ed. New York: Random House, 1991.

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CASTLE RACKRENT
AND
IRISH BULLS,¹
BY
MARIA EDGEWORTH

LONDON, BALDWIN & CRADOCK, PATERNOSTER ROW,
AND OTHER PROPRIETORS.

1832.

1. *Castle Rackrent* appeared in the first volume of the eighteen-volume collected *Tales and Novels* in 1832, along with *Irish Bulls*, which Maria Edgeworth and Richard Lovell Edgeworth had originally published in 1802. Marilyn Butler notes that *Irish Bulls* is “an essay on the ‘bull,’ or comic verbal blunder, which is supposed to be characteristic of the Irish when speaking English” (*Literary Biography*, 360) and that much of the material in the work came from Richard Lovell Edgeworth’s own experiences (243). Butler also suggests that Maria Edgeworth saw *Irish Bulls* as a way of “atoning” for *Castle Rackrent*’s depiction of “Irish foolishness and backwardness” in that its purpose was to show that people other than “the Irish make blunders . . . [and] that many Irish ‘blunders’ have a natural explanation, . . . [as well as] that the speech of lower-class Irish is in fact exceptionally expressive” (360–1).

TALES AND NOVELS
BY
MARIA EDGEWORTH.

IN EIGHTEEN VOLUMES.

VOL. I
CONTAINING
CASTLE RACKRENT;
AN ESSAY ON IRISH BULLS;
AN ESSAY ON
THE NOBLE SCIENCE OF SELF-JUSTIFICATION.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR BALDWIN AND CRADOCK;

J. MURRAY; J. BOOKER; A. K. NEWMAN AND CO.;
WHITTAKER, TREACHER, AND ARNOT; T. TEGG;
SIMPKIN AND MARSHALL; SMITH, ELDER, AND
CO.; E. HODGSON; HOULSTON AND SON; J. TEM-
PLEMAN; J. BAIN; R. MACKIE; RENSHAW AND
RUSH; AND G. AND J. ROBINSON, LIVERPOOL.

1832.

Preface.

THE prevailing taste of the public for anecdote has been censured and ridiculed by critics who aspire to the character of superior wisdom: but if we consider it in a proper point of view, this taste is an incontestible proof of the good sense and profoundly philosophic temper of the present times. Of the numbers who study, or at least who read history, how few derive any advantage from their labours! The heroes of history are so decked out by the fine fancy of the professed historian; they talk in such measured prose, and act from such sublime or such diabolical motives, that few have sufficient taste, wickedness, or heroism, to sympathise in their fate. Besides, there is much uncertainty even in the best authenticated ancient or modern histories; and that love of truth, which in some minds is innate and immutable, necessarily leads to a love of secret memoirs, and private anecdotes. We cannot judge either of the feelings or of the characters of men with perfect accuracy, from their actions or their appearance in public; it is from their careless conversations, their half-finished sentences, that we may hope with the greatest probability of success to discover their real characters. The life of a great or of a little man written by himself, the familiar letters, the diary of any individual published by his friends or by his enemies, after his decease, are esteemed important literary curiosities. We are surely justified, in this eager desire, to collect the most minute facts relative to the domestic lives, not only of the great and good, but even of the worthless and insignificant, since it is only by a comparison of their actual happiness or misery in the privacy of domestic life that we can form a just estimate of the real reward of virtue, or the real punishment of vice. That the great are not as happy as they seem, that the external circumstances of fortune and rank do not constitute felicity, is asserted by every moralist: the historian can seldom, consistently with his dignity, pause to illustrate this truth: it is therefore to the biographer we must have recourse. After we have beheld splendid characters

playing their parts on the great theatre of the world, with all the advantages of stage effect and decoration, we anxiously beg to be admitted behind the scenes, that we may take a nearer view of the actors and actresses.

Some may perhaps imagine, that the value of biography depends upon the judgment and taste of the biographer: but on the contrary it may be maintained, that the merits of a biographer are inversely as the extent of his intellectual powers and of his literary talents. A plain unvarnished tale is preferable to the most highly ornamented narrative. Where we see that a man has the power, we may naturally suspect that he has the will to deceive us; and those who are used to literary manufacture know how much is often sacrificed to the rounding of a period, or the pointing of an antithesis.

That the ignorant may have their prejudices as well as the learned cannot be disputed; but we see and despise vulgar errors: we never bow to the authority of him who has no great name to sanction his absurdities. The partiality which blinds a biographer to the defects of his hero, in proportion as it is gross, ceases to be dangerous; but if it be concealed by the appearance of candour, which men of great abilities best know how to assume, it endangers our judgment sometimes, and sometimes our morals. If her grace the Duchess of Newcastle, instead of penning her lord's elaborate eulogium, had undertaken to write the life of Savage, we should not have been in any danger of mistaking an idle, ungrateful libertine for a man of genius and virtue.¹ The talents of a biographer are often fatal to his reader. For these reasons the public often judiciously countenance those, who, without sagacity to discriminate character, without elegance of style to relieve the tediousness of narrative, without enlargement of mind to draw any conclusions from the facts they relate, simply pour forth anecdotes, and retail conversations, with all the minute prolixity of a gossip in a country town.

1. Margaret Lucas Cavendish (1624–1674), Duchess of Newcastle, second wife of William, Duke of Newcastle (1592–1676); dramatist, poet, and author of *The Life of William Cavendish* in 1667. Samuel Johnson (1709–1784) met Richard Savage (1679?–1743), poet, dramatist, and prose satirist, not long after Johnson's arrival in London, and they remained friends, despite Savage's riotous living and constant indebtedness. In his *Lives of the Poets* (1779–1781), Johnson included *Life of Mr. Richard Savage*, an homage to his friend (EB, 8:654, 10:479; CBD, 257–8, 741–2, 1183).

Preface

The author of the following Memoirs has upon these grounds fair claims to the public favour and attention; he was an illiterate old steward, whose partiality to *the family*, in which he was bred and born, must be obvious to the reader. He tells the history of the Rackrent family in his vernacular idiom, and in the full confidence that Sir Patrick, Sir Murtagh, Sir Kit, and Sir Condry Rackrent's affairs will be as interesting to all the world as they were to himself. Those who were acquainted with the manners of a certain class of the gentry of Ireland some years ago will want no evidence of the truth of honest Thady's narrative: to those who are totally unacquainted with Ireland, the following Memoirs will perhaps be scarcely intelligible, or probably they may appear perfectly incredible. For the information of the *ignorant* English reader, a few notes have been subjoined by the editor, and he had it once in contemplation to translate the language of Thady into plain English; but Thady's idiom is incapable of translation, and, besides, the authenticity of his story would have been more exposed to doubt if it were not told in his own characteristic manner. Several years ago he related to the editor the history of the Rackrent family, and it was with some difficulty that he was persuaded to have it committed to writing; however, his feelings for "*the honour of the family*," as he expressed himself, prevailed over his habitual laziness, and he at length completed the narrative which is now laid before the public.

The editor hopes his readers will observe that these are "tales of other times": that the manners depicted in the following pages are not those of the present age: the race of the Rackrents has long since been extinct in Ireland; and the drunken Sir Patrick, the litigious Sir Murtagh, the fighting Sir Kit, and the slovenly Sir Condry, are characters which could no more be met with at present in Ireland, than Squire Western or Parson Trulliber² in England. There is a time, when individuals can bear to be rallied for their past follies and absurdities, after they have acquired new habits, and a new consciousness. Nations as well as individuals gradually lose attachment to

2. Characters in Henry Fielding's comic novels; Squire Western is the somewhat vulgar country squire of *Tom Jones* (1749), and Parson Trulliber the churlish country churchman in *Joseph Andrews* (1742).

their identity, and the present generation is amused rather than offended by the ridicule that is thrown upon its ancestors.

Probably we shall soon have it in our power, in a hundred instances, to verify the truth of these observations.

When Ireland loses her identity by an union with Great Britain,³ she will look back with a smile of good-humoured complacency on the Sir Kits and Sir Condys of her former existence.

1800.

3. The Act of Union between Ireland and Great Britain went into effect in January 1801. It ended Irish political autonomy by abolishing the Irish parliament in Dublin and uniting the two parliaments at Westminster. Despite his view that the union was a positive move for Ireland, Maria Edgeworth's father, Richard Lovell Edgeworth, voted against it because its passage was supported by bribery and corruption in England. Maria Edgeworth commented at the time that "England has not any right to do to Ireland *good against her will*" (OCR2, xxxv).

CASTLE RACKRENT;
AN
HIBERNIAN¹ TALE.
TAKEN FROM FACTS,
AND FROM
THE MANNERS OF THE IRISH SQUIRES
BEFORE THE YEAR 1782.²

1. Irish.

2. In 1782, at the age of fifteen, Maria Edgeworth arrived in Ireland, at Edgeworthstown in County Longford, the Edgeworth family estate. Also in 1782, Ireland gained legislative independence from Great Britain as the Declaratory Act of 1720 was appealed, and the British parliament no longer had the right to legislate over Ireland's affairs.

Castle Rackrent.

Monday Morning.^G

HAVING, out of friendship for the family, upon whose estate, praised be heaven! I and mine have lived rent-free, time out of mind, voluntarily undertaken to publish the MEMOIRS of the RACK-RENT FAMILY, I think it my duty to say a few words, in the first place, concerning myself. My real name is Thady Quirk,¹ though in the family I have always been known by no other than “*honest Thady*,”—afterwards, in the time of Sir Murtagh, deceased, I remember to hear them calling me “*old Thady*,” and now I’m come to “poor Thady”; for I wear a long great coatⁱ winter and summer, which is very handy, as I never put my arms into the sleeves; they are as good as new, though come Holantide² next I’ve had it these seven years; it holds on by a single button round my neck, cloak fashion. To look at me, you would hardly think “poor Thady” was the father of attorney Quirk; he is a high gentleman, and never minds what poor Thady says, and having better than fifteen hundred a year, landed estate, looks down upon honest Thady; but I wash my hands of his doings, and as I have lived so will I die, true and loyal to the family. The family of the Rackrents is, I am proud to say, one of the most ancient in the kingdom. Every body knows this is not the old family name, which was O’Shaughlin, related to the kings of Ireland³—but that was before my time. My grandfather was driver to the great Sir Patrick O’Shaughlin, and I heard him, when I was a

1. Gallagher notes that “a ‘quirk’ is not only an oddity or trick, but also a twist or flourish in writing, a pure graphic excess that means nothing in itself” (*Nobody’s Story*, 298–9).

2. Feast of Holland-Tide in the Catholic liturgical calendar; All Saints’ Eve; Halloween; October 31.

3. The O’Shaughnessys were supposedly descended from Daithí, the son of Fiachra, the last pagan king of Ireland (c. 500 A.D.) (*DIF*, 304-5; *SOI*, 196).

boy, telling how the Castle Rackrent estate came to Sir Patrick; Sir Tallyhoo Rackrent was cousin-german⁴ to him, and had a fine estate of his own, only never a gate upon it, it being his maxim that a car was the best gate. Poor gentleman! He lost a fine hunter and his life, at last, by it, all in one day's hunt. But I ought to bless that day, for the estate came straight into *the* family, upon one condition, which Sir Patrick O'Shaughlin at the time took sadly to heart, they say, but thought better of it afterwards, seeing how large a stake depended upon it, that he should by act of parliament, take and bear the surname and arms of Rackrent.

Now it was that the world was to see what was *in* Sir Patrick. On coming into the estate, he gave the finest entertainment ever was heard of in the country: not a man could stand after supper but Sir Patrick himself, who could sit out the best man in Ireland, let alone the three kingdoms itself.⁵ He had his house, from one year's end to another, as full of company as ever it could hold, and fuller; for rather than be left out of the parties at Castle Rackrent, many gentlemen, and those men of the first consequence and landed estates in the country, such as the O'Neils of Ballynagrotty, and the Moneygawls of Mount Juliet's Town, and O'Shannons of New Town Tullyhog,⁵ made it their choice, often and often, when there was no room to be had for love nor money, in long winter nights, to sleep in the chicken-house, which Sir Patrick had fitted up for the purpose of accommodating his friends and the public in general, who honoured him with their company unexpectedly at Castle Rackrent; and this went on, I can't tell you how long—the whole country rang with his praises!—Long life to him! I'm sure I love to look upon his picture, now opposite to me; though I never saw him, he must have been a portly gentleman—his neck something short, and remarkable for the largest pimple on his nose, which, by his particular desire, is still extant in his picture, said to be a striking likeness, though taken when young. He is said also to be the inventor of raspberry whiskey, which

4. "The son or daughter of (one's) uncle or aunt" (*OED*); a full cousin.

5. The O'Neils were "one of the three most important Gaelic families" in Ireland, their name meaning "champion." They were descended from legendary warrior Niall of the Nine Hostages, and were "nicknamed 'Creagh' or branch, because they camouflaged themselves with greenery" in battle. O'Maonaigh is from "moenach," meaning dumb, or from "maonach," meaning wealthy. There are several branches throughout Ireland with various spellings, including "Money" or "Mooney." Shannon is derived from "Sean," meaning "old," "wise" (*DIF*, 259–60, 272–3, 303; *SOI*, 164–5, 174).

is very likely, as nobody has ever appeared to dispute it with him, and as there still exists a broken punch-bowl at Castle Rackrent, in the garret, with an inscription to that effect—a great curiosity. A few days before his death he was very merry; it being his honour's birthday, he called my grandfather in, God bless him! to drink the company's health, and filled a bumper himself, but could not carry it to his head, on account of the great shake in his hand; on this he cast his joke, saying, "What would my poor father say to me if he was to pop out of the grave, and see me now? I remember when I was a little boy, the first bumper of claret he gave me after dinner, how he praised me for carrying it so steady to my mouth. Here's my thanks to him—a bumper toast." Then he fell to singing the favourite song he learned from his father—for the last time, poor gentleman—he sung it that night as loud and as hearty as ever with a chorus:

"He that goes to bed, and goes to bed sober,
Falls as the leaves do, falls as the leaves do, and dies in
October;
But he that goes to bed, and goes to bed mellow,
Lives as he ought to do, lives as he ought to do, and dies an
honest fellow."

Sir Patrick died that night: just as the company rose to drink his health with three cheers, he fell down in a sort of fit, and was carried off; they sat it out, and were surprised, on inquiry, in the morning, to find that it was all over with poor Sir Patrick. Never did any gentleman live and die more beloved in the country by rich and poor. His funeral was such a one as was never known before or since in the county! All the gentlemen in the three counties were at it; far and near, how they flocked: my great grandfather said, that to see all the women even in their red cloaks, you would have taken them for the army drawn out. Then such a fine whillaluh!^G You might have heard it to the farthest end of the county, and happy the man who could get but a sight of the hearse! But who'd have thought it? Just as all was going on right, through his own town they were passing, when the body was seized for debt—a rescue was apprehended from the mob; but the heir who attended the funeral was against that, for fear of consequences, seeing that those villains who came to serve acted under the disguise of the law: so, to be sure, the law must take its course, and little gain had the creditors for their pains. First and foremost,

they had the curses of the country: and Sir Murtagh Rackrent, the new heir, in the next place, on account of this affront to the body, refused to pay a shilling of the debts, in which he was countenanced by all the best gentlemen of property, and others of his acquaintance; Sir Murtagh alleging in all companies, that he all along meant to pay his father's debts of honour, but the moment the law was taken of him, there was an end of honour to be sure. It was whispered (but none but the enemies of the family believe it), that this was all a sham seizure to get quit of the debts, which he had bound himself to pay in honour.

It's a long time ago, there's no saying how it was, but this for certain, the new man did not take at all after the old gentleman; the cellars were never filled after his death, and no open house, or any thing as it used to be; the tenants even were sent away without their whiskey.^G I was ashamed myself, and knew not what to say for the honour of the family; but I made the best of a bad case, and laid it all at my lady's door, for I did not like her any how, nor any body else; she was of the family of the Skinflints, and a widow; it was a strange match for Sir Murtagh; the people in the country thought he demeaned himself greatly,^G but I said nothing: I knew how it was; Sir Murtagh was a great lawyer, and looked to the great Skinflint estate; there, however, he overshot himself; for though one of the co-heiresses, he was never the better for her, for she outlived him many's the long day—he could not see that to be sure when he married her. I must say for her, she made him the best of wives, being a very notable stirring woman, and looking close to every thing. But I always suspected she had Scotch blood⁶ in her veins; any thing else I could have looked over in her from a regard to the family. She was a strict observer for self and servants of Lent, and all fast days, but not holidays. One of the maids having fainted three times the last day of Lent, to keep soul and body together, we put a morsel of roast beef into her mouth, which came from Sir Murtagh's dinner, who never fasted, not he; but somehow or other it unfortunately reached my lady's ears, and the priest of the parish had a complaint made of it the next day, and the poor girl was forced as soon as she could walk to do penance for it, before she could get any peace or absolution, in the house or out of it. However, my lady was very charitable in her

6. Suggesting the stereotype that Scots were overly frugal.

own way. She had a charity school⁷ for poor children, where they were taught to read and write gratis, and where they were kept well to spinning gratis for my lady in return; for she had always heaps of duty yarn from the tenants, and got all her household linen out of the estate from first to last; for after the spinning, the weavers on the estate took it in hand for nothing, because of the looms my lady's interest could get from the Linen Board⁸ to distribute gratis. Then there was a bleach-yard near us, and the tenant dare refuse my lady nothing, for fear of a law-suit Sir Murtagh kept hanging over him about the water-course. With these ways of managing, 'tis surprising how cheap my lady got things done, and how proud she was of it. Her table the same way, kept for next to nothing; duty fowls, and duty turkies, and duty geese,^G came as fast as we could eat 'em, for my lady kept a sharp look-out, and knew to a tub of butter every thing the tenants had, all round. They knew her way, and what with fear of driving for rent and Sir Murtagh's lawsuits, they were kept in such good order, they never thought of coming near Castle Rackrent without a present of something or other—nothing too much or too little for my lady—eggs, honey, butter, meal, fish, game, grouse, and herrings, fresh or salt, all went for something. As for their young pigs, we had them, and the best bacon and hams they could make up, with all young chickens in spring; but they were a set of poor wretches, and we had nothing but misfortunes with them, always breaking and running away. This, Sir Murtagh and my lady said, was all their former landlord Sir Patrick's fault, who let 'em all get the half year's rent into arrear; there was something in that to be sure. But Sir Murtagh was as much the contrary way; for let alone making English tenants^G of them, every soul, he was always driving and driving, and pounding and pounding, and canting^G and canting,

7. Based on those in England and Wales, and popular in the early eighteenth century until the shift in the 1720s to charter schools, the charity schools were "small schools . . . sponsored by individual landlords and philanthropists, by clergy, parish vestries, and municipalities. . . . [They] nurtur[ed] . . . children of the Protestant poor in church formularies and basic literacy . . . [as well as in] aspects of linen production" (when subsidized by the Linen Board; see n.8) (*OCIH*, 84).

8. From 1711 to 1828, the Linen Board monitored and funded the rapidly growing linen industry. The Board "encouraged the spread of new methods and inventions, and . . . [awarded] prizes . . . [to the best] spinners, weavers, and bleachers" (*OCIH2*, 332–3).

and replevying⁹ and replevying, and he made a good living of trespassing cattle; there was always some tenant's pig, or horse, or cow, or calf, or goose, trespassing, which was so great a gain to Sir Murtagh, that he did not like to hear me talk of repairing fences. Then his heriots and duty-work^G brought him in something, his turf was cut, his potatoes set and dug, his hay brought home, and, in short, all the work about his house done for nothing; for in all our leases there were strict clauses heavy with penalties, which Sir Murtagh knew well how to enforce; so many days' duty-work of man and horse, from every tenant, he was to have, and had, every year; and when a man vexed him, why the finest day he could pitch on, when the cratur was getting in his own harvest, or thatching his cabin, Sir Murtagh made it a principle to call upon him and his horse; so he taught 'em all, as he said, to know the law of landlord and tenant. As for law, I believe no man, dead or alive, ever loved it so well as Sir Murtagh. He had once sixteen suits pending at a time, and I never saw him so much himself; roads, lanes, bogs, wells, ponds, eel-wires, orchards, trees, tithes, vagrants, gravelpits, sand-pits, dung-hills, and nuisances,¹⁰ every thing upon the face of the earth furnished him good matter for a suit. He used to boast that he had a lawsuit for every letter in the alphabet. How I used to wonder to see Sir Murtagh in the midst of the papers in his office! Why he could hardly turn about for them. I made bold to shrug my shoulders once in his presence, and thanked my stars I was not born a gentleman to so much toil and trouble; but Sir Murtagh took me up short with his old proverb, "learning is better than house or land." Out of forty-nine suits which he had, he never lost one but seventeen;^G the rest he gained with costs, double costs, treble costs sometimes; but even that did not pay. He was a very learned man in the law, and had the character of it; but how it was I can't tell, these suits that he carried cost him a power of money; in the end he sold some hundreds a year of the family estate; but he was a very learned man in the law, and I know nothing of the matter, except having a great regard for the family; and I could not help grieving when he sent me to post up notices of the sale of the fee-simple of the lands

9. Reclaiming goods.

10. "Anything injurious or obnoxious to the community, or to the individual as a member of it (esp. as an owner or occupier of property), for which some legal remedy may be found" (*OED*).

and appurtenances¹¹ of Timoleague. “I know, honest Thady,” says he, to comfort me, “what I’m about better than you do; I’m only selling to get the ready money wanting to carry on my suit with spirit with the Nugents of Carrickashaughlin.”

He was very sanguine about that suit with the Nugents of Carrickashaughlin. He could have gained it, they say, for certain, had it pleased Heaven to have spared him to us, and it would have been at the least a plump two thousand a year in his way; but things were ordered otherwise, for the best to be sure. He dug up a fairy-mount^{iiG} against my advice, and had no luck afterwards. Though a learned man in the law, he was a little too incredulous in other matters. I warned him that I heard the very Bansheeⁱⁱⁱ that my grandfather heard under Sir Patrick’s window a few days before his death. But Sir Murtagh thought nothing of the Banshee, nor of his cough with a spitting of blood, brought on, I understand, by catching cold in attending the courts, and overstraining his chest with making himself heard in one of his favourite causes. He was a great speaker with a powerful voice; but his last speech was not in the courts at all. He and my lady, though both of the same way of thinking in some things, and though she was as good a wife and great economist as you could see, and he the best of husbands, as to looking into his affairs, and making money for his family; yet I don’t know how it was, they had a great deal of sparring and jarring between them. My lady had her privy purse¹²—and she had her weed ashes,^G and her sealing money^G upon the signing of all the leases, with something to buy gloves besides; and, besides, again often took money from the tenants, if offered properly, to speak for them to Sir Murtagh about abatements and renewals. Now the weed ashes and the glove money¹³ he allowed her clear perquisites; though once when he saw her in a new gown saved out of the weed ashes, he told her to my face (for he could say a sharp thing), that she should not put on her

11. “A minor property, right, or privilege, belonging to another more important, and passing in possession with it; an appendage” (*OED*). Sir Murtagh sells the “fee simple” or rights in perpetuity of some of the Rackrent lands in order to fund his lawsuits, thus diminishing the estate.

12. An allowance from Sir Murtagh for Lady Rackrent’s private expenses.

13. “A gratuity given to servants ostensibly to buy them gloves” (*OED*); in this case, it seems Sir Murtagh gave Lady Rackrent glove money that she spent on herself rather than on gloves for servants.

weeds before her husband's death. But in a dispute about an abatement, my lady would have the last word, and Sir Murtagh grew mad;^G I was within hearing of the door, and now I wish I had made bold to step in. He spoke so loud, the whole kitchen was out on the stairs.^G All on a sudden he stopped and my lady too. Something has surely happened, thought I—and so it was, for Sir Murtagh in his passion broke a blood-vessel, and all the law in the land could do nothing in that case. My lady sent for five physicians, but Sir Murtagh died, and was buried. She had a fine jointure settled upon her,¹⁴ and took herself away to the great joy of the tenantry. I never said any thing one way or the other, whilst she was part of the family, but got up to see her go at three o'clock in the morning. "It's a fine morning, honest Thady," says she; "good bye to ye," and into the carriage she stept, without a word more, good or bad, or even half a crown; but I made my bow, and stood to see her safe out of sight for the sake of the family.

Then we were all bustle in the house, which made me keep out of the way, for I walk slow and hate a bustle; but the house was all hurry-scurry, preparing for my new master. Sir Murtagh, I forgot to notice, had no childer;^{iv} so the Rackrent estate went to his younger brother, a young dashing officer, who came amongst us before I knew for the life of me whereabouts I was, in a gig¹⁵ or some of them things, with another spark¹⁶ along with him, and led horses, and servants, and dogs, and scarce a place to put any Christian of them into; for my late lady had sent all the feather-beds off before her, and blankets and household linen, down to the very knife cloths, on the cars to Dublin, which were all her own, lawfully paid for out of her own money. So the house was quite bare, and my young master, the moment ever he set foot in it out of his gig, thought all those things must come of themselves, I believe, for he never looked after any thing at all, but harum-scarum called for every thing as if we were conjurers, or he in a public-house. For my part, I could not bestir myself any how; I had been so much used to my late master and mistress, all was upside down with me, and the new servants in the

14. "A freehold for the wife of lands and tenants to take effect upon the death of the husband and to last for the life of the wife at least" (*OED*).

15. "A light, two-wheeled, one-horse carriage" (*OED*).

16. "A young man of an elegant or foppish character; one who affects smartness or display in dress and manners" (*OED*).

servants' hall were quite out of my way; I had nobody to talk to and if it had not been for my pipe and tobacco, should, I verily believe, have broke my heart for poor Sir Murtagh.

But one morning my new master caught a glimpse of me as I was looking at his horse's heels, in hopes of a word from him. "And is that old Thady?" says he, as he got into his gig: I loved him from that day to this, his voice was so like the family; and he threw me a guinea out of his waistcoat pocket, as he drew up the reins with the other hand, his horse rearing too; I thought I never set my eyes on a finer figure of a man, quite another sort from Sir Murtagh, though withal, *to me*, a family likeness. A fine life we should have led, had he staid amongst us, God bless him! He valued a guinea as little as any man: money to him was no more than dirt, and his gentleman and groom, and all belonging to him, the same; but the sporting season over, he grew tired of the place, and having got down a great architect for the house, and an improver for the grounds, and seen their plans and elevations, he fixed a day for settling with the tenants, but went off in a whirlwind to town, just as some of them came into the yard in the morning. A circular letter¹⁷ came next post from the new agent, with news that the master was sailed for England, and he must remit 500*l.* to Bath for his use before a fortnight was at an end; bad news still for the poor tenants, no change still for the better with them. Sir Kit Rackrent, my young master, left all to the agent; and though he had the spirit of a prince, and lived away to the honour of his country abroad, which I was proud to hear of, what were we the better for that at home? The agent was one of your middle men,^v who grind the face of the poor, and can never bear a man with a hat upon his head: he ferretted the tenants out of their lives; not a week without a call for money, drafts upon drafts from Sir Kit; but I laid it all to the fault of the agent; for, says I, what can Sir Kit do with so much cash, and he a single man? But still it went. Rents must be all paid up to the day, and afore; no allowance for improving tenants, no consideration for those who had built upon their farms: no sooner was a lease out, but the land was advertised to the highest bidder, all the old tenants turned out, when they spent their substance in the hope and trust of a renewal from the landlord. All was now set at the highest penny to a parcel of poor wretches, who

17. "A letter addressed to several persons, who have the same interest in some common affair" (*OED*).

meant to run away, and did so, after taking two crops out of the ground. Then fining down the year's rent^G came into fashion; any thing for the ready penny; and with all this, and presents to the agent and the driver,^G there was no such thing as standing it. I said nothing, for I had a regard for the family; but I walked about thinking if his honour Sir Kit knew all this, it would go hard with him, but he'd see us righted; not that I had any thing for my own share to complain of, for the agent was always very civil to me, when he came down into the country, and took a great deal of notice of my son Jason. Jason Quirk, though he be my son, I must say, was a good scholar from his birth, and a very 'cute lad:¹⁸ I thought to make him a priest,^G but he did better for himself: seeing how he was as good a clerk as any in the county, the agent gave him his rent accounts to copy, which he did first of all for the pleasure of obliging the gentleman, and would take nothing at all for his trouble, but was always proud to serve the family. By-and-bye a good farm bounding us to the east fell into his honour's hands, and my son put in a proposal for it: why shouldn't he, as well as another? The proposals all went over to the master at the Bath,¹⁹ who knowing no more of the land than the child unborn, only having once been out a grousing on it before he went to England; and the value of lands, as the agent informed him, falling every year in Ireland, his honour wrote over in all haste a bit of a letter, saying he left it all to the agent, and that he must set it as well as he could to the best bidder, to be sure, and send him over 200*l.* by return of post: with this the agent gave me a hint, and I spoke a good word for my son, and gave out in the country that nobody need bid against us. So his proposal was just the thing, and he a good tenant; and he got a promise of an abatement in the rent, after the first year, for advancing the half year's rent at signing the lease, which was wanting to complete the agent's 200*l.*, by the return of the post, with all which my master wrote back he was well satisfied. About this time we learned from the agent as a great secret, how the money went so fast, and the reason of the thick coming of the master's drafts: he was a little too fond of play;²⁰ and Bath, they

18. "Acute, clever, keen-witted, sharp, shrewd" (*OED*).

19. Bath, England, an eighteenth-century resort town known for its hot spring baths, as well as its "concerts, receptions, balls, fireworks, theatres, milliners, booksellers, coffee houses, card parties, and pleasure walks" (*OCBH*, 84).

20. Play at cards, for money.

say, was no place for a young man of his fortune, where there were so many of his own countrymen too hunting him up and down, day and night, who had nothing to lose. At last, at Christmas, the agent wrote over to stop the drafts, for he could raise no more money on bond or mortgage, or from the tenants, or any how, nor had he any more to lend himself, and desired at the same time to decline the agency for the future, wishing Sir Kit his health and happiness, and the compliments of the season, for I saw the letter before ever it was sealed, when my son copied it. When the answer came, there was a new turn in affairs, and the agent was turned out; and my son Jason, who had corresponded privately with his honour occasionally on business, was forthwith desired by his honour to take the accounts into his own hands, and look them over till further orders. It was a very spirited letter to be sure: Sir Kit sent his service, and the compliments of the season, in return to the agent, and he would fight him with pleasure to-morrow, or any day, for sending him such a letter, if he was born a gentleman, which he was sorry (for both their sakes) to find (too late) he was not. Then, in a private postscript, he condescended to tell us, that all would be speedily settled to his satisfaction, and we should turn over a new leaf, for he was going to be married in a fortnight to the grandest heiress in England, and had only immediate occasion at present for 200*l.*, as he would not choose to touch his lady's fortune for travelling expences home to Castle Rackrent, where he intended to be, wind and weather permitting, early in the next month; and desired fires, and the house to be painted, and the new building to go on as fast as possible, for the reception of him and his lady before that time; with several words besides in the letter, which we could not make out, because, God bless him! he wrote in such a flurry. My heart warmed to my new lady when I read this; I was almost afraid it was too good news to be true; but the girls fell to scouring, and it was well they did, for we soon saw his marriage in the paper to a lady with I don't know how many tens of thousand pounds to her fortune: then I watched the post-office for his landing; and the news came to my son of his and the bride being in Dublin, and on the way home to Castle Rackrent. We had bonfires all over the country, expecting him down the next day, and we had his coming of age still to celebrate, which he had not time to do properly before he left the country; therefore a great ball was expected, and great doings upon his coming, as it were, fresh to take possession of his ancestors' estate. I never shall forget the day he

came home: we had waited and waited all day long till eleven o'clock at night, and I was thinking of sending the boy to lock the gates, and giving them up for that night, when there came the carriages thundering up to the great hall door. I got the first sight of the bride; for when the carriage door opened, just as she had her foot on the steps, I held the flam^G full in her face to light her, at which she shut her eyes, but I had a full view of the rest of her, and greatly shocked I was, for by that light she was little better than a blackamoor,²¹ and seemed crippled, but that was only sitting so long in the chariot. "You're kindly welcome to Castle Rackrent, my lady," says I (recollecting who she was); "did your honour hear of the bonfires?" His honour spoke never a word, nor so much as handed her up the steps—he looked to me no more like himself than nothing at all; I know I took him for the skeleton of his honour: I was not sure what to say next to one or t'other, but seeing she was a stranger in a foreign country, I thought it but right to speak cheerful to her, so I went back again to the bonfires. "My lady," says I, as she crossed the hall, "there would have been fifty times as many, but for fear of the horses and frightening your ladyship: Jason and I forbid them, please your honour." With that she looked at me a little bewildered. "Will I have a fire lighted in the state room to-night?" was the next question I put to her, but never a word she answered, so I concluded she could not speak a word of English, and was from foreign parts. The short and long of it was I couldn't tell what to make of her; so I left her to herself, and went straight down to the servants' hall to learn something for certain about her. Sir Kit's own man was tired, but the groom set him a talking at last, and we had it all out before ever I closed my eyes that night. The bride might well be a great fortune—she was a Jewish²² by all accounts, who are famous for their great riches. I had

21. "Any very dark-skinned person" (*OED*). Until the early nineteenth century, Jews and Catholics were treated with a similar bias in Ireland, and blacks and Jews were presented as "stage types" and often "lumped together" (Ullrich, 94).

22. In mid-eighteenth-century Ireland and Great Britain, there were several attempts to pass a bill allowing Jews to be naturalized; each attempt failed due to public outcry. "The Irish Naturalization Act of 1784 explicitly excluded Jews, a provision repealed only in 1816." As a result, "the Jewish presence in Ireland remained a volatile one, highly responsive to economic and other circumstances. . . . At the end of the eighteenth century, the Dublin [Jewish] community largely collapsed, due partly to conversion and intermarriage with Christians, but also to emigration at a time of political unrest and economic uncertainty" (*OCIH2*, 291).

never seen any of that tribe or nation before, and could only gather, that she spoke a strange kind of English of her own, that she could not abide pork or sausages, and went neither to church or mass. Mercy upon his honour's poor soul, thought I; what will become of him and his, and all of us, with his heretic blackamoor at the head of the Castle Rackrent estate! I never slept a wink all night for thinking of it; but before the servants I put my pipe in my mouth, and kept my mind to myself; for I had a great regard for the family; and after this, when strange gentlemen's servants came to the house, and would begin to talk about the bride, I took care to put the best foot foremost, and passed her for a nabob²³ in the kitchen, which accounted for her dark complexion and every thing.

The very morning after they came home, however, I saw how things were plain enough between Sir Kit and my lady, though they were walking together arm in arm after breakfast, looking at the new building and the improvements. "Old Thady," said my master, just as he used to do, "how do you do?" "Very well, I thank your honour's honour," said I; but I saw he was not well pleased, and my heart was in my mouth as I walked along after him. "Is the large room damp, Thady?" said his honour. "Oh, damp, your honour! How should it but be as dry as a bone," says I, "after all the fires we have kept in it day and night? It's the barrack-room^G your honour's talking on." "And what is a barrack-room, pray, my dear?" were the first words I ever heard out of my lady's lips. "No matter, my dear!" said he, and went on talking to me, ashamed like I should witness her ignorance. To be sure, to hear her talk one might have taken her for an innocent,^G for it was, "what's this, Sir Kit?" and "what's that, Sir Kit?" all the way we went. To be sure, Sir Kit had enough to do to answer her. "And what do you call that, Sir Kit?" said she, "that, that looks like a pile of black bricks, pray, Sir Kit?" "My turf stack, my dear," said my master, and bit his lip. Where have you lived, my lady, all your life, not to know a turf stack when you see it, thought I, but I said nothing. Then, by-and-bye, she takes out her glass,²⁴ and begins spying over the country. "And what's all that black swamp out yonder, Sir Kit?" says she. "My bog, me dear," says he, and went on whistling. "It's a very ugly prospect, my dear," says she. "You

23. "A person of high rank or great wealth; specifically one who returned from India with a large fortune acquired there; a very rich and luxurious person" (*OED*).

24. *Mirror*.

don't see it, my dear," says he, "for we've planted it out, when the trees grow up in summer time," says he. "Where are the trees," said she, "my dear?" still looking through her glass. "You are blind, my dear," says he; "what are these under your eyes?" "These shrubs," said she. "Trees," said he. "May be they are what you call trees in Ireland, my dear," said she; "but they are not a yard high, are they?" "They were planted out but last year, my lady," says I, to soften matters between them, for I saw she was going the way to make his honour mad with her; "they are very well grown for their age, and you'll not see the bog of Allyballycarricko'shaughlin²⁵ at-all-at-all through the skreen, when once the leaves come out. But, my lady, you must not quarrel with any part or parcel of Allyballycarricko'shaughlin, for you don't know how many hundred years that same bit of bog has been in the family; we would not part with the bog of Allyballycarricko'shaughlin upon no account at all; it cost the late Sir Murtagh two hundred good pounds to defend his title to it and boundaries against the O'Learys, who cut a road through it." Now one would have thought this would have been hint enough for my lady, but she fell to laughing like one out of their right mind, and made me say the name of the bog over for her to get it by heart, a dozen times—then she must ask me how to spell it, and what was the meaning of it in English—Sir Kit standing by whistling all the while; I verily believed she laid the corner stone of all her future misfortunes at that very instant; but I said no more, only looked at Sir Kit.

There were no balls, no dinners, no doings; the country was all disappointed.—Sir Kit's gentleman said in a whisper to me, it was all my lady's own fault, because she was so obstinate about the cross. "What cross?" says I; "is it about her being a heretic?" "Oh, no such matter," says he; "my master does not mind her heresies, but her diamond cross, it's worth I can't tell you how much; and she has thousands of English pounds concealed in diamonds about her, which she as good as promised to give up to my master before he married, but now she won't part with any of them, and she must take the consequences."

25. Bogs, which are deposits of peat of postglacial origin, covered one-seventh of Ireland in the past and caused the land to be unavailable for settlement or farming; however, this peat served as a popular source of cheap fuel. "Traditionally, the right to dig peat or 'turf' for fuel constituted an important element in leasehold agreements between landlords and tenants" (*OCIH2*, 54).

Her honey-moon, at least her Irish honey-moon, was scarcely well over, when his honour one morning said to me, “Thady, buy me a pig!” and then the sausages were ordered, and here was the first open breaking-out of my lady’s troubles. My lady came down herself into the kitchen, to speak to the cook about the sausages, and desired never to see them more at her table. Now my master had ordered them, and my lady knew that. The cook took my lady’s part, because she never came down into the kitchen, and was young and innocent in house-keeping, which raised her pity; besides, said she, at her own table, surely, my lady should order and disorder what she pleases; but the cook soon changed her note, for my master made it a principle to have the sausages, and swore at her for a Jew herself, till he drove her fairly out of the kitchen; then, for fear of her place, and because he threatened that my lady should give her no discharge without the sausages, she gave up, and from that day forward always sausages, or bacon, or pig meat in some shape or other, went up to table; upon which my lady shut herself up in her own room, and my master said she might stay there, with an oath: and to make sure of her, he turned the key in the door, and kept it ever after in his pocket. We none of us ever saw or heard her speak for seven years after that:^{vi} he carried her dinner himself. Then his honour had a great deal of company to dine with him, and balls in the house, and was as gay and gallant, and as much himself as before he was married; and at dinner he always drank my Lady Rackrent’s good health, and so did the company, and he sent out always a servant, with his compliments to my Lady Rackrent, and the company was drinking her ladyship’s health, and begged to know if there was any thing at table he might send her; and the man came back, after the sham errand, with my Lady Rackrent’s compliments, and she was very much obliged to Sir Kit—she did not wish for any thing, but drank the company’s health. The country, to be sure, talked and wondered at my lady’s being shut up, but nobody chose to interfere or ask any impertinent questions, for they knew my master was a man very apt to give a short answer himself, and likely to call a man out for it afterwards;²⁶ he was a famous shot; had killed his man before he came of age, and nobody scarce dared look at him whilst at Bath. Sir Kit’s character was so well known in the country, that he

26. To challenge someone to a duel.

lived in peace and quietness ever after, and was a great favourite with the ladies, especially when in process of time, in the fifth year of her confinement, my Lady Rackrent fell ill, and took entirely to her bed, and he gave out that she was now skin and bone, and could not last through the winter. In this he had two physicians' opinions to back him (for now he called in two physicians for her), and tried all his arts to get the diamond cross from her on her death-bed, and to get her to make a will in his favour of her separate possessions; but there she was too tough for him. He used to swear at her behind her back, after kneeling to her to her face, and call her in the presence of his gentleman his stiff-necked Israelite, though before he married her, that same gentleman told me he used to call her (how he could bring it out, I don't know) "my pretty Jessica!"²⁷ To be sure it must have been hard for her to guess what sort of a husband he reckoned to make her. When she was lying, to all expectation, on her death-bed of a broken heart, I could not but pity her, though she was a Jewish; and considering too it was no fault of hers to be taken with my master so young as she was at the Bath, and so fine a gentleman as Sir Kit was when he courted her; and considering too, after all they had heard and seen of him as a husband, there were now no less than three ladies in our county talked of for his second wife, all at daggers drawn with each other, as his gentleman swore, at the balls, for Sir Kit for their partner,—I could not but think them bewitched; but they all reasoned with themselves, that Sir Kit would make a good husband to any Christian but a Jewish, I suppose, and especially as he was now a reformed rake;²⁸ and it was not known how my lady's fortune was settled in her will, nor how the Castle Rackrent estate was all mortgaged, and bonds out against him, for he was never cured of his gaming tricks; but that was the only fault he had, God bless him.

My lady had a sort of fit, and it was given out she was dead, by mistake: this brought things to a sad crisis for my poor master,—one of the three ladies showed his letters to her brother, and claimed his promises, whilst another did the same. I don't mention names. Sir Kit, in his defence, said he would meet any man who dared to question

27. Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice* V.i.21.

28. A "rake" is a "man of loose habits and immoral character; an idle, dissipated man of fashion" (*OED*). That such a man could be reformed was the hope of many an eighteenth-century mother and her marriageable daughter.

his conduct, and as to the ladies, they must settle it amongst them who was to be his second, and his third, and his fourth, whilst his first was still alive, to his mortification and theirs. Upon this, as upon all former occasions, he had the voice of the country with him, on account of the great spirit and propriety he acted with. He met and shot the first lady's brother; the next day he called out the second, who had a wooden leg; and their place of meeting by appointment being in a new ploughed field, the wooden-leg man stuck fast in it. Sir Kit, seeing his situation, with great candour fired his pistol over his head; upon which the seconds interposed, and convinced the parties there had been a slight misunderstanding between them; thereupon they shook hands cordially, and went home to dinner together. This gentleman, to show the world how they stood together, and by the advice of the friends of both parties, to re-establish his sister's injured reputation, went out with Sir Kit as his second, and carried his message next day to the last of his adversaries: I never saw him in such fine spirits as that day he went out—sure enough he was within ames-ace of getting quit handsomely of all his enemies; but unluckily, after hitting the tooth pick out of his adversary's finger and thumb, he received a ball in a vital part, and was brought home, in little better than an hour after the affair, speechless on a hand-barrow, to my lady. We got the key out of his pocket the first thing we did, and my son Jason ran to unlock the barrack-room, where my lady had been shut up for seven years, to acquaint her with the fatal accident. The surprise bereaved her of her senses at first, nor would she believe but we were putting some new trick upon her, to entrap her out of her jewels, for a great while, till Jason bethought himself of taking her to the window, and showed her the men bringing Sir Kit up the avenue upon the hand-barrow, which had immediately the desired effect; for directly she burst into tears, and pulling her cross from her bosom, she kissed it with as great devotion as ever I witnessed; and lifting up her eyes to heaven, uttered some ejaculation, which none present heard; but I take the sense of it to be, she returned thanks for this unexpected interposition in her favour when she had least reason to expect it. My master was greatly lamented: there was no life in him when we lifted him off the barrow, so he was laid out immediately, and *waked* the same night. The country was all in an uproar about him, and not a soul but cried shame upon his murderer; who would have been hanged surely, if he could have been

brought to his trial, whilst the gentlemen in the country were up about it; but he very prudently withdrew himself to the continent before the affair was made public. As for the young lady, who was the immediate cause of the fatal accident, however innocently, she could never show her head after at the balls in the county or any place; and by the advice of her friends and physicians, she was ordered soon after to Bath, where it was expected, if any where on this side of the grave, she would meet with the recovery of her health and lost peace of mind. As a proof of his great popularity, I need only add, that there was a song made upon my master's untimely death in the newspapers, which was in every body's mouth, singing up and down through the country, even down to the mountains, only three days after his unhappy exit. He was also greatly bemoaned at the Curragh,^G where his cattle were well known; and all who had taken up his bets formerly were particularly inconsolable for his loss to society. His stud sold at the cant^G at the greatest price ever known in the county; his favourite horses were chiefly disposed of amongst his particular friends, who would give any price for them for his sake; but no ready money was required by the new heir, who wished not to displease any of the gentlemen of the neighbourhood just upon his coming to settle amongst them; so a long credit was given where requisite, and the cash has never been gathered in from that day to this.

But to return to my lady:—She got surprisingly well after my master's decease. No sooner was it known for certain that he was dead, than all the gentlemen within twenty miles of us came in a body, as it were, to set my lady at liberty, and to protest against her confinement, which they now for the first time understood was against her own consent. The ladies too were as attentive as possible, striving who should be foremost with their morning visits; and they that saw the diamonds spoke very handsomely of them, but thought it a pity they were not bestowed, if it had so pleased God, upon a lady who would have become them better. All these civilities wrought little with my lady, for she had taken an unaccountable prejudice against the country, and every thing belonging to it, and was so partial to her native land, that after parting with the cook, which she did immediately upon my master's decease, I never knew her easy one instant, night or day, but when she was packing up to leave us. Had she meant to make any stay in Ireland, I stood a great chance of being a great favourite with her; for when she found I understood the

weathercock,²⁹ she was always finding some pretence to be talking to me, and asking me which way the wind blew, and was it likely, did I think, to continue fair for England. But when I saw she had made up her mind to spend the rest of her days upon her own income and jewels in England, I considered her quite as a foreigner, and not at all any longer as part of the family. She gave no vails to the servants at Castle Rackrent at parting, notwithstanding the old proverb of "*as rich as a Jew*," which, she being a Jewish, they built upon with reason. But from first to last she brought nothing but misfortunes amongst us; and if it had not been all along with her, his honour, Sir Kit, would have been now alive in all appearance. Her diamond cross was, they say, at the bottom of it all; and it was a shame for her, being his wife, not to show more duty, and to have given it up when he condescended to ask so often for such a bit of a trifle in his distresses, especially when he all along made it no secret he married for money. But we will not bestow another thought upon her. This much I thought it lay upon my conscience to say, in justice to my poor master's memory.

'Tis an ill wind that blows nobody no good—the same wind that took the Jew Lady Rackrent over to England brought over the new heir to Castle Rackrent.

Here let me pause for breath in my story, for though I had a great regard for every member of the family, yet without compare Sir Conolly, commonly called, for short, amongst his friends, Sir Condy Rackrent, was ever my great favourite, and, indeed, the most universally beloved man I had ever seen or heard of, not excepting his great ancestor Sir Patrick, to whose memory he, amongst other instances of generosity, erected a handsome marble stone in the church of Castle Rackrent, setting forth in large letters his age, birth, parentage, and many other virtues, concluding with the compliment so justly due, that "Sir Patrick Rackrent lived and died a monument of old Irish hospitality."

29. "A vane in the form of a cock which turns with its head to the wind" (*OED*). Thady's ability to read which way the wind is blowing, literally, and perhaps figuratively, within Castle Rackrent impresses Lady Rackrent.

Continuation of the Memoirs of the Rackrent Family.

HISTORY OF SIR CONOLLY RACKRENT.

SIR CONDY RACKRENT, by the grace of God heir at law to the Castle Rackrent estate, was a remote branch of the family: born to little or no fortune of his own, he was bred to the bar; at which, having many friends to push him, and no mean natural abilities of his own, he doubtless would, in process of time, if he could have borne the drudgery of that study, have been rapidly made king's counsel,¹ at the least; but things were disposed of otherwise, and he never went the circuit² but twice, and then made no figure for want of a fee, and being unable to speak in public. He received his education chiefly in the college of Dublin; but before he came to years of discretion³ lived in the country, in a small but slated house, within view of the end of the avenue. I remember him bare footed and headed, running through the street of O'Shaughlin's town, and playing at pitch and toss, ball, marbles, and what not, with the boys of the town, amongst whom my son Jason was a great favourite with him. As for me, he was ever my white-headed boy:⁴ often's the time when I

1. "The first king's counsel in Ireland were created in the early seventeenth century. Initially they provided specific legal services to the crown. The title seems soon to have become purely honorific and a recognition of seniority and superior standing at the bar" (*OCIH*, 311).

2. After 1715, attorneys needed to have been admitted to one of the Four Courts in order to practice on the assize circuits, and to have given five years of service to a judge or official of one of those Courts. The assize circuits were regularly scheduled visits made by a judge to particular towns in order to hear cases and pass judgment (*OCIH*, 312).

3. To the age when he had "the ability to discern or distinguish what is right, befitting, or advisable, especially as regards one's own conduct or action" (*OED*). In English law, the age of fourteen.

4. In Ireland, a term of endearment (*OCR*, 126). In addition, "Whiteboys" were members of an eighteenth-century agrarian protest movement whose adherents wore white

would call in at his father's, where I was always made welcome; he would slip down to me in the kitchen, and love to sit on my knee, whilst I told him stories of the family, and the blood from which he was sprung, and how he might look forward, if the *then* present man should die without childer, to being at the head of the Castle Rackrent estate. This was then spoke quite and clear at random to please the child, but it pleased Heaven to accomplish my prophecy afterwards, which gave him a great opinion of my judgment in business. He went to a little grammar-school with many others, and my son amongst the rest, who was in his class, and not a little useful to him in his book learning, which he acknowledged with gratitude ever after. These rudiments of his education thus completed, he got a horseback, to which exercise he was ever addicted, and used to gallop over the country while yet but a slip of a boy, under the care of Sir Kit's huntsman, who was very fond of him, and often lent him his gun, and took him out a-shooting under his own eye. By these means he became well acquainted and popular amongst the poor in the neighbourhood early; for there was not a cabin at which he had not stopped some morning or other, along with the huntsman, to drink a glass of burnt whiskey out of an eggshell, to do him good and warm his heart, and drive the cold out of his stomach. The old people always told him he was a great likeness of Sir Patrick; which made him first have an ambition to take after him, as far as his fortune should allow. He left us when of an age to enter the college, and there completed his education and nineteenth year; for as he was not born to an estate, his friends thought it incumbent on them to give him the best education which could be had for love or money; and a great deal of money consequently was spent upon him at college and Temple.⁵ He was a very little altered for the worse by what he saw there of the great world; for when he came down into the country, to pay us a visit, we thought him just the same man as ever, hand and glove with every one, and as far from high, though not without his own proper

shirts over their work clothes. Begun in 1761, the Whiteboys brought grievances over enclosures, tithes, trespass, rents, and evictions. The Whiteboy Acts of 1766, 1776, and 1787 "created numerous capital offenses connected with protest" (*OCIH*2, 621).

5. Trinity College, Dublin, was "the only Irish university at this time" (*PCR*, 350). Temple refers to "either of the two groups of buildings on the site of the Templars' former establishment in London, occupied by two of the Inns of Court." Irish barristers were required to "receive their legal training at the Inns of Court in England, [as] . . . Irish courts followed English common law precedents and rules" (*OCIH*, 311).

share of family pride, as any man ever you see. Latterly, seeing how Sir Kit and the Jewish lived together, and that there was no one between him and the Castle Rackrent estate, he neglected to apply to the law as much as was expected of him; and secretly many of the tenants, and others, advanced him cash upon his note of hand value received, promising bargains of leases and lawful interest, should he ever come into the estate. All this was kept a great secret, for fear the present man, hearing of it, should take it into his head to take it ill of poor Condry, and so should cut him off for ever, by levying a fine, and suffering a recovery to dock the entail.^G Sir Murtagh would have been the man for that; but Sir Kit was too much taken up philandering to consider the law in this case, or any other. These practices I have mentioned, to account for the state of his affairs, I mean Sir Condry's, upon his coming into the Castle Rackrent estate. He could not command a penny of his first year's income; which, and keeping no accounts, and the great sight of company he did, with many other causes too numerous to mention, was the origin of his distresses. My son Jason, who was now established agent, and knew every thing, explained matters out of the face to Sir Conolly, and made him sensible of his embarrassed situation. With a great nominal rent-roll, it was almost all paid away in interest; which being for convenience suffered to run on, soon doubled the principal, and Sir Condry was obliged to pass new bonds for the interest, now grown principal, and so on. Whilst this was going on, my son requiring to be paid for his trouble, and many years' service in the family gratis, and Sir Condry not willing to take his affairs into his own hands, or to look them even in the face, he gave my son a bargain of some acres, which fell out of lease, at a reasonable rent. Jason set the land, as soon as his lease was sealed, to under tenants, to make the rent, and got two hundred a-year profit rent; which was little enough considering his long agency. He bought the land at twelve years' purchase two years afterwards, when Sir Condry was pushed for money on an execution, and was at the same time allowed for his improvements thereon. There was a sort of hunting-lodge upon the estate, convenient to my son Jason's land, which he had his eye upon about this time; and he was a little jealous of Sir Condry, who talked of setting it to a stranger, who was just come into the country—Captain Moneygawl was the man. He was son and heir to the Moneygawls of Mount Juliet's town, who had a great estate in the next county to ours; and my master was loth to disoblige the young gentleman, whose heart

was set upon the lodge; so he wrote him back, that the lodge was at his service, and if he would honour him with his company at Castle Rackrent, they could ride over together some morning, and look at it, before signing the lease. Accordingly the captain came over to us, and he and Sir Condry grew the greatest friends ever you see, and were for ever out a-shooting or hunting together, and were very merry in the evenings; and Sir Condry was invited of course to Mount Juliet's town; and the family intimacy that had been in Sir Patrick's time was now recollected, and nothing would serve Sir Condry but he must be three times a-week at the least with his new friends, which grieved me, who knew, by the captain's groom and gentleman, how they talked of him at Mount Juliet's town, making him quite, as one may say, a laughingstock and a butt for the whole company; but they were soon cured of *that* by an accident that surprised 'em not a little, as it did me. There was a bit of a scrawl found upon the waiting-maid of old Mr. Moneygaw's youngest daughter, Miss Isabella, that laid open the whole; and her father, they say, was like one out of his right mind, and swore it was the last thing he ever should have thought of, when he invited my master to his house, that his daughter should think of such a match. But their talk signified not a straw, for, as Miss Isabella's maid reported, her young mistress was fallen over head and ears in love with Sir Condry, from the first time that ever her brother brought him into the house to dinner: the servant who waited that day behind my master's chair was the first who knew it, as he says; though it's hard to believe him, for he did not tell till a great while afterwards; but, however, it's likely enough, as the thing turned out, that he was not far out of the way; for towards the middle of dinner, as he says, they were talking of stage-plays, having a playhouse, and being great play-actors at Mount Juliet's town; and Miss Isabella turns short to my master, and says, "Have you seen the play-bill, Sir Condry?" "No, I have not," said he. "Then more shame for you," said the captain her brother, "not to know that my sister is to play Juliet to-night, who plays it better than any woman on or off the stage in all Ireland." "I am very happy to hear it," said Sir Condry; and there the matter dropped for the present. But Sir Condry all this time, and a great while afterwards, was at a terrible nonplus; for he had no liking, not he, to stage-plays, nor to Miss Isabella either; to his mind, as it came out over a bowl of whiskey punch at home, his little Judy M'Quirk, who was daughter to a sister's son of mine, was worth twenty of Miss Isabella. He had seen her often

when he stopped at her father's cabin to drink whiskey out of the egg-shell, out hunting, before he came to the estate, and, as she gave out, was under something like a promise of marriage to her. Any how, I could not but pity my poor master, who was so bothered between them, and he an easy-hearted man, that could not disoblige nobody, God bless him! To be sure, it was not his place to behave ungenerous to Miss Isabella, who had disoblige all her relations for his sake, as he remarked; and then she was locked up in her chamber, and forbid to think of him any more, which raised his spirit, because his family was, as he observed, as good as theirs at any rate, and the Rackrents a suitable match for the Moneygawls any day in the year: all which was true enough; but it grieved me to see, that upon the strength of all this, Sir Condry was growing more in the mind to carry off Miss Isabella to Scotland,⁶ in spite of her relations, as she desired.

"It's all over with our poor Judy!" said I, with a heavy sigh, making bold to speak to him one night when he was a little cheerful, and standing in the servants' hall all alone with me, as was often his custom. "Not at all," said he; "I never was fonder of Judy than at this present speaking; and to prove it to you," said he, and he took from my hand a halfpenny, change that I had just got along with my tobacco, "and to prove it to you, Thady," says he, "it's a toss up with me which I should marry this minute, her or Mr. Moneygawl of Mount Juliet's town's daughter—so it is." "Oh, boo! boo!"^{vii} says I, making light of it, to see what he would go on to next; "your honour's joking, to be sure; there's no compare between our poor Judy and Miss Isabella, who has a great fortune, they say." "I'm not a man to mind a fortune, nor never was," said Sir Condry, proudly, "whatever her friends may say; and to make short of it," says he, "I'm come to a determination upon the spot"; with that he swore such a terrible oath, as made me cross myself; "and by this book," said he, snatching up my ballad book,⁷ mistaking it for my prayer

6. Scottish law allowed for legally binding marriages without parental consent for minors or the reading of banns, both of which were required by English law under Lord Hardwicke's Marriage Act of 1753.

7. Collections of ballads were popular as early as the sixteenth century in Ireland, but especially during the period of 1780–1900, during which many ballads "were directly related to political developments, and street ballads in particular can be regarded as a running commentary on Irish political life. By the late 1790s, collections of ballad texts were commonplace, most of them explicitly associated with revolution and

book, which lay in the window; “and by this book,” says he, “and by all the books that ever were shut and opened, it’s come to a toss-up with me, and I’ll stand or fall by the toss; and so, Thady, hand me over that *pin*^{viii} out of the ink-horn,” and he makes a cross on the smooth side of the halfpenny; “Judy M’Quirk,” says he, “her mark.”^{ix} God bless him! His hand was a little unsteadied by all the whiskey punch he had taken, but it was plain to see his heart was for poor Judy. My heart was all as one as in my mouth when I saw the halfpenny up in the air, but I said nothing at all; and when it came down, I was glad I had kept myself to myself, for to be sure now it was all over with poor Judy. “Judy’s out a luck,” said I, striving to laugh. “I’m out a luck,” said he; and I never saw a man look so cast down: he took up the halfpenny off the flag, and walked away quite sober-like by the shock. Now, though as easy a man, you would think, as any in the wide world, there was no such thing as making him unsay one of these sort of vows,^x which he had learned to reverence when young, as I well remember teaching him to toss up for bog-berries⁸ on my knee. So I saw the affair was as good as settled between him and Miss Isabella, and I had no more to say but to wish her joy, which I did the week afterwards, upon her return from Scotland with my poor master.

My new lady was young, as might be supposed of a lady that had been carried off, by her own consent, to Scotland; but I could only see her at first through her veil, which, from bashfulness or fashion, she kept over her face. “And am I to walk through all this crowd of people, my dearest love?” said she to Sir Condry, meaning us servants and tenants, who had gathered at the back gate. “My dear,” said Sir Condry, “there’s nothing for it but to walk, or to let me carry you as far as the house, for you see the back road is too narrow for a carriage, and the great piers have tumbled down across the front approach; so there’s no driving the right way, by reason of the ruins.” “Plato, thou reasonest well!”⁹ said she, or words to that effect, which I could no ways understand; and again, when her foot stumbled against a broken bit of a car-wheel, she cried out, “Angels and

nationalist or patriotic sentiment. The events of 1798 were to become a standard trope in the ballad repertory” (*OCIH*, 34).

8. Cranberries.

9. Addison’s *Cato* (1713) V.i.1.

ministers of grace defend us!”¹⁰ Well, thought I, to be sure if she’s no Jewish, like the last, she is a mad woman for certain, which is as bad: it would have been as well for my poor master to have taken up with poor Judy, who is in her right mind, any how.

She was dressed like a mad woman, moreover, more than like any one I ever saw afore or since, and I could not take my eyes off her, but still followed behind her, and her feathers on the top of her hat were broke going in at the low back door, and she pulled out her little bottle¹¹ out of her pocket to smell to when she found herself in the kitchen, and said, “I shall faint with the heat of this odious, odious place.” “My dear, it’s only three steps across the kitchen, and there’s a fine air if your veil was up,” said Sir Condry, and with that threw back her veil, so that I had then a full sight of her face; she had not at all the colour of one going to faint, but a fine complexion of her own, as I then took it to be, though her maid told me after it was all put on; but even complexion and all taken in, she was no way, in point of good looks, to compare to poor Judy; and with all she had a quality toss with her;¹² but may be it was my over-partiality to Judy, into whose place I may say she stept, that made me notice all this. To do her justice, however, she was, when we came to know her better, very liberal in her housekeeping, nothing at all of the skin-flint in her; she left every thing to the housekeeper; and her own maid, Mrs. Jane, who went with her to Scotland, gave her the best of characters for generosity. She seldom or ever wore a thing twice the same way, Mrs. Jane told us, and was always pulling her things to pieces, and giving them away, never being used, in her father’s house, to think of expence in any thing; and she reckoned, to be sure, to go on the same way at Castle Rackrent; but, when I came to inquire, I learned that her father was so mad with her for running off, after his locking her up, and forbidding her to think any more of Sir Condry, that he would not give her a farthing; and it was lucky for her she had a few thousands of her own, which had been left to her by a good grandmother, and these were very convenient to begin with. My master and my lady set out in great style; they had the finest

10. Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* I.iv.39.

11. Smelling salts.

12. She tosses her head with a disdainful, arrogant, superior air, indicative of a high social status.

coach and chariot,¹³ and horses and liveries, and cut the greatest dash in the county, returning their wedding visits; and it was immediately reported, that her father had undertaken to pay all my master's debts, and of course all his tradesmen gave him a new credit, and every thing went on smack smooth, and I could not but admire my lady's spirit, and was proud to see Castle Rackrent again in all its glory. My lady had a fine taste for building, and furniture, and play-houses, and she turned every thing topsy-turvy, and made the barrack-room into a theatre, as she called it, and she went on as if she had a mint of money at her elbow; and, to be sure, I thought she knew best, especially as Sir Condry said nothing to it one way or the other. All he asked, God bless him! was to live in peace and quietness, and have his bottle or his whiskey punch at night to himself. Now this was little enough, to be sure, for any gentleman; but my lady couldn't abide the smell of the whiskey punch. "My dear," says he, "you liked it well enough before we were married, and why not now?" "My dear," said she, "I never smelt it, or I assure you I should never have prevailed upon myself to marry you." "My dear, I am sorry you did not smell it, but we can't help that now," returned my master, without putting himself in a passion, or going out of his way, but just fair and easy helped himself to another glass, and drank it off to her good health. All this the butler told me, who was going backwards and forwards unnoticed with the jug, and hot water, and sugar, and all he thought wanting. Upon my master's swallowing the last glass of whiskey punch my lady burst into tears, calling him an ungrateful, base, barbarous wretch! and went off into a fit of hysterics, as I think Mrs. Jane called it, and my poor master was greatly frightened, this being the first thing of the kind he had seen; and he fell straight on his knees before her, and, like a good-hearted cratur as he was, ordered the whiskey punch out of the room, and bid 'em throw open all the windows, and cursed himself: and then my lady came to herself again, and when she saw him kneeling there bid him get up, and not forswear himself any more, for that she was sure he did not love her, nor never had: this we learnt from Mrs. Jane, who was the only person left present at all this. "My dear," returns my master, thinking, to be sure, of Judy, as well he might, "whoever told you so is an incendiary, and I'll have

13. "Applied in the eighteenth century to a light four-wheeled carriage with only back seats, and differing from the post-chaise in having a coachbox" (*OED*).

'em turned out of the house this minute, if you'll only let me know which of them it was." "Told me what?" said my lady, starting upright in her chair. "Nothing at all, nothing at all," said my master, seeing he had overshot himself, and that my lady spoke at random; "but what you said just now, that I did not love you, Bella; who told you that?" "My own sense," she said, and she put her handkerchief to her face, and leant back upon Mrs. Jane, and fell to sobbing as if her heart would break. "Why now, Bella, this is very strange of you," said my poor master; "if nobody has told you nothing, what is it you are taking on for at this rate, and exposing yourself and me for this way?" "Oh, say no more, say no more; every word you say kills me," cried my lady; and she ran on like one, as Mrs. Jane says, raving, "Oh, Sir Condry, Sir Condry! I that had hoped to find in you—" "Why now, faith, this is a little too much; do, Bella, try to recollect yourself, my dear; am not I your husband, and of your own choosing; and is not that enough?" "Oh, too much! too much!" cried my lady, wringing her hands. "Why, my dear, come to your right senses, for the love of heaven. See, is not the whiskey punch, jug and bowl, and all, gone out of the room long ago? What is it, in the wide world, you have to complain of?" But still my lady sobbed and sobbed, and called herself the most wretched of women; and among other out-of-the-way provoking things, asked my master, was he fit for company for her, and he drinking all night? This nettling him, which it was hard to do, he replied, that as to drinking all night, he was then as sober as she was herself, and that it was no matter how much a man drank, provided it did no ways affect or stagger him: that as to being fit company for her, he thought himself of a family to be fit company for any lord or lady in the land; but that he never prevented her from seeing and keeping what company she pleased, and that he had done his best to make Castle Rackrent pleasing to her since her marriage, having always had the house full of visitors, and if her own relations were not amongst them, he said that was their own fault, and their pride's fault, of which he was sorry to find her ladyship had so unbecoming a share. So concluding, he took his candle and walked off to his room, and my lady was in her tantrums for three days after; and would have been so much longer, no doubt, but some of her friends, young ladies, and cousins, and second cousins, came to Castle Rackrent, by my poor master's express invitation, to see her, and she was in a hurry to get up, as Mrs. Jane called it, a play for them, and so got well, and was as finely dressed,

and as happy to look at, as ever; and all the young ladies, who used to be in her room dressing of her, said, in Mrs. Jane's hearing, that my lady was the happiest bride ever they had seen, and that to be sure a love-match was the only thing for happiness, where the parties could any way afford it.

As to affording it, God knows it was little they knew of the matter; my lady's few thousands could not last forever, especially the way she went on with them, and letters from tradesfolk came every post thick and threefold with bills as long as my arm, of years' and years' standing; my son Jason had 'em all handed over to him, and the pressing letters were all unread by Sir Condry, who hated trouble, and could never be brought to hear talk of business, but still put it off and put it off, saying, settle it any how, or bid 'em call again to-morrow, or speak to me about it some other time. Now it was hard to find the right time to speak, for in the mornings he was a-bed, and in the evenings over his bottle, where no gentleman chooses to be disturbed. Things in a twelvemonth or so came to such a pass there was no making a shift to go on any longer, though we were all of us well enough used to live from hand to mouth at Castle Rackrent. One day, I remember, when there was a power of company, all sitting after dinner in the dusk, not to say dark, in the drawing-room, my lady having rung five times for candles, and none to go up, the housekeeper sent up the footman, who went to my mistress, and whispered behind her chair how it was. "My lady," says he, "there are no candles in the house." "Bless me," says she, "then take a horse and gallop off as fast as you can to Carrick O'Fungus, and get some." "And in the mean time tell them to step into the playhouse, and try if there are not some bits left," added Sir Condry, who happened to be within hearing. The man was sent up again to my lady, to let her know there was no horse to go, but one that wanted a shoe. "Go to Sir Condry, then; I know nothing at all about the horses," said my lady; "why do you plague me with these things?" How it was settled I really forget, but to the best of my remembrance, the boy was sent down to my son Jason's to borrow candles for the night. Another time in the winter, and on a desperate cold day, there was no turf in for the parlour and above stairs, and scarce enough for the cook in the kitchen; the little *gossoon*^{xi} was sent off to the neighbours, to see and beg or borrow some, but none could he bring back with him for love or money; so as needs must, we were forced to trouble Sir Condry—"Well, and if there's no turf to be had

in the town or country, why what signifies talking any more about it; can't ye go and cut down a tree?" "Which tree, please your honour?" I made bold to say. "Any tree at all that's good to burn," said Sir Condy; "send off smart and get one down, and the fires lighted, before my lady gets up to breakfast, or the house will be too hot to hold us." He was always very considerate in all things about my lady, and she wanted for nothing whilst he had it to give. Well, when things were tight with them about this time, my son Jason put in a word again about the lodge, and made a genteel offer to lay down the purchase-money, to relieve Sir Condy's distresses. Now Sir Condy had it from the best authority, that there were two writs come down to the sheriff against his person, and the sheriff, as ill luck would have it, was no friend of his, and talked how he must do his duty, and how he would do it, if it was against the first man in the country, or even his own brother; let alone one who had voted against him at the last election, as Sir Condy had done. So Sir Condy was fain to take the purchase-money of the lodge from my son Jason to settle matters; and sure enough it was a good bargain for both parties, for my son bought the fee-simple of a good house for him and his heirs for ever, for little or nothing, and by selling of it for that same, my master saved himself from a gaol.¹⁴ Every way it turned out fortunate for Sir Condy; for before the money was all gone there came a general election,¹⁵ and he being so well beloved in the county, and one of the oldest families, no one had a better right to stand candidate for the vacancy; and he was called upon by all his friends, and the whole county I may say, to declare himself against the old member, who had little thought of a contest. My master did not relish the thoughts of a troublesome canvass, and all the ill-will he might bring upon himself by disturbing the peace of the county, besides the expence, which was no trifle; but all his friends called upon one another to subscribe,¹⁶ and they formed themselves into a committee, and wrote all his circular letters for him, and engaged all his agents, and did all the business unknown to him; and he was well pleased

14. Jail.

15. A parliamentary election. Each of the thirty-two counties in Ireland sent two Members of Parliament (MPs), the 117 boroughs sent 234 MPs, and the control over the voting varied.

16. "To agree or be a party to a course of action or condition of things; . . . to promise to contribute (money) in support of any object" (*OED*).

that it should be so at last, and my lady herself was very sanguine about the election; and there was open house kept night and day at Castle Rackrent, and I thought I never saw my lady look so well in her life as she did at that time; there were grand dinners, and all the gentlemen drinking success to Sir Condry till they were carried off; and then dances and balls, and the ladies all finishing with a raking pot of tea^G in the morning. Indeed it was well the company made it their choice to sit up all nights, for there were not half beds enough for the sights of people that were in it, though there were shake-downs in the drawing-room always made up before sunrise for those that liked it. For my part, when I saw the doings that were going on, and the loads of claret that went down the throats of them that had no right to be asking for it, and the sights of meat that went up to table and never came down, besides what was carried off to one or t'other below stairs, I couldn't but pity my poor master, who was to pay for all; but I said nothing, for fear of gaining myself ill-will. The day of election will come some time or other, says I to myself, and all will be over; and so it did, and a glorious day it was as any I ever had the happiness to see. "Huzza! Huzza! Sir Condry Rackrent for ever!" was the first thing I hears in the morning, and the same and nothing else all day, and not a soul sober only just when polling, enough to give their votes as became 'em, and to stand the browbeating of the lawyers, who came tight enough upon us; and many of our freeholders¹⁷ were knocked off, having never a freehold that they could safely swear to, and Sir Condry was not willing to have any man perjure himself for his sake, as was done on the other side, God knows, but no matter for that. Some of our friends were dumb-founded, by the lawyers asking them: Had they ever been upon the ground where their freeholds lay? Now Sir Condry being tender of the consciences of them that had not been on the ground, and so could not swear to a freehold when cross-examined by them lawyers, sent out for a couple of cleaves-full of the sods¹⁸ of his farm of Gulteeshinnagh:^{xiii} and as soon as the sods came into town he set each man upon his sod, and so then, ever after, you know, they could fairly swear they had

17. "Freeholders . . . owned property worth 40 shillings (£2) a year and were thus entitled to vote in county elections. . . . The 'freeholder' was thought of as an independent voter exercising his legal rights unconstrained by the lure of political parties or threats" (*OCBH*, 392).

18. Basket of turf or earth with the grass growing on it.

been upon the ground.^{xiii} We gained the day by this piece of honesty.^G I thought I should have died in the streets for joy when I seed my poor master chaired, and he bareheaded, and it raining as hard as it could pour; but all the crowds following him up and down, and he bowing and shaking hands with the whole town. "Is that Sir Condy Rackrent in the chair?" says a stranger man in the crowd. "The same," says I; "who else should it be? God bless him!" "And I take it, then, you belong to him?" says he. "Not at all," says I; "but I live under him, and have done so these two hundred years and upwards, me and mine." "It's lucky for you, then," rejoins he, "that he is where he is; for was he any where else but in the chair, this minute he'd be in a worse place; for I was sent down on purpose to put him up,^{xiv} and here's my order for so doing in my pocket." It was a writ that villain the wine merchant had marked against my poor master for some hundreds of an old debt, which it was a shame to be talking of at such a time as this. "Put it in your pocket again, and think no more of it any ways for seven years to come, my honest friend," says I; "he's a member of parliament now, praised be God, and such as you can't touch him: and if you'll take a fool's advice, I'd have you keep out of the way this day, or you'll run a good chance of getting your deserts amongst my master's friends, unless you choose to drink his health like every body else." "I've no objection to that in life," said he; so we went into one of the public houses kept open for my master; and we had a great deal of talk about this thing and that. "And how is it," says he, "your master keeps on so well upon his legs? I heard say he was off Holantide twelvemonth past." "Never was better or heartier in his life," said I. "It's not that I'm after speaking of," said he; "but there was a great report of his being ruined." "No matter," says I, "the sheriffs two years running were his particular friends, and the sub-sheriffs were both of them gentlemen, and were properly spoken to; and so the writs lay snug with them, as they, as I understand by my son Jason the custom in them cases is, returned the writs as they came to them to those that sent 'em; much good may it do them! with a word in Latin, that no such person as Sir Condy Rackrent, Bart., was to be found in those parts." "Oh, I understand all those ways better, no offence, than you," says he, laughing, and at the same time filling his glass to my master's good health, which convinced me he was a warm friend in his heart after all, though appearances were a little suspicious or so at first. "To be sure," says he, still cutting his joke, "when a man's over head and

shoulders in debt, he may live the faster for it, and the better, if he goes the right way about it; or else how is it so many live on so well, as we see every day, after they are ruined?" "How is it," says I, being a little merry at the time; "how is it but just as you see the ducks in the chicken-yard, just after their heads are cut off by the cook, running round and round faster than when alive?" At which conceit he fell a laughing, and remarked he had never had the happiness yet to see the chicken-yard at Castle Rackrent. "It won't be long so, I hope," says I; "you'll be kindly welcome there, as every body is made by my master; there is not a freer spoken gentleman, or a better beloved, high or low, in all Ireland." And of what passed after this I'm not sensible, for we drank Sir Condry's good health and the downfall of his enemies till we could stand no longer ourselves. And little did I think at the time, or till long after, how I was harbouring my poor master's greatest of enemies myself. This fellow had the impudence, after coming to see the chicken-yard, to get me to introduce him to my son Jason; little more than the man that never was born did I guess at his meaning by this visit: he gets him a correct list fairly drawn out from my son Jason of all my master's debts, and goes straight round to the creditors and buys them all up, which he did easy enough, seeing the half of them never expected to see their money out of Sir Condry's hands. Then, when this base-minded limb of the law, as I afterward detected him in being, grew to be sole creditor over all, he takes him out a custodiam on all the denominations and sub-denominations, and every carton and half carton^G upon the estate; and not content with that, must have an execution against the master's goods and down to the furniture, though little worth, of Castle Rackrent itself.¹⁹ But this is a part of my story I'm not come to yet, and it's bad to be forestalling: ill news flies fast enough all the world over.

To go back to the day of the election, which I never think of but with pleasure and tears of gratitude for those good times; after the election was quite and clean over, there comes shoals of people from all parts, claiming to have obliged my master with their votes, and putting him in mind of promises which he could never remember himself to have made; one was to have a freehold for each of his four

19. A custodiam is a "three-year grant of land made by the Exchequer under Irish law to a lessee" (OCR, 124).

sons; another was to have a renewal of a lease; another an abatement; one came to be paid ten guineas for a pair of silver buckles sold my master on the hustings,²⁰ which turned out to be no better than copper gilt; another had a long bill for oats, the half of which never went into the granary to my certain knowledge, and the other half were not fit for the cattle to touch; but the bargain was made the week before the election, and the coach and saddle horses were got into order for the day, besides a vote fairly got by them oats; so no more reasoning on that head; but then there was no end to them that were telling Sir Condry he had engaged to make their sons excisemen, or high constables, or the like; and as for them that had bills to give in for liquor, and beds, and straw, and ribands, and horses, and postchaises for the gentlemen freeholders that came from all parts and other counties to vote for my master, and were not, to be sure, to be at any charges, there was no standing against all these; and, worse than all, the gentlemen of my master's committee, who managed all for him, and talked how they'd bring him in without costing him a penny, and subscribed by hundreds very genteelly, forgot to pay their subscriptions, and had laid out in agents and lawyers' fees and secret service money the Lord knows how much; and my master could never ask one of them for their subscription you are sensible, nor for the price of a fine horse he had sold one of them; so it all was left at his door. He could never, God bless him again! I say, bring himself to ask a gentleman for money, despising such sort of conversation himself; but others, who were not gentlemen born, behaved very uncivil in pressing him at this very time, and all he could do to content 'em all was to take himself out of the way as fast as possible to Dublin, where my lady had taken a house fitting for him as a member of parliament, to attend his duty in there all the winter. I was very lonely when the whole family was gone, and all the things they had ordered to go, and forgot, sent after them by the car. There was then a great silence in Castle Rackrent, and I went moping from room to room, hearing the doors clap for want of right locks, and the wind through the broken windows, that the glazier never would come to mend, and the rain coming through the roof and best ceilings all over the house for want of the slater, whose bill was not paid, besides our

20. "Temporary platform on which candidates for the British Parliament stood when nominated and from which they addressed the electors" (WD).

having no slates or shingles for that part of the old building which was shingled and burnt when the chimney took fire, and had been open to the weather ever since. I took myself to the servants' hall in the evening to smoke my pipe as usual, but missed the bit of talk we used to have there sadly, and ever after was content to stay in the kitchen and boil my little potatoes,^{xv} and put up my bed there; and every post-day I looked in the newspaper, but no news of my master in the house; he never spoke good or bad; but as the butler wrote down word to my son Jason, was very ill used by the government about a place that was promised him and never given, after his supporting them against his conscience very honourably, and being greatly abused for it, which hurt him greatly, he having the name of a great patriot in the country before. The house and living in Dublin too were not to be had for nothing, and my son Jason said, "Sir Condry must soon be looking out for a new agent, for I've done my part, and can do no more:—if my lady had the bank of Ireland to spend, it would go all in one winter, and Sir Condry would never gainsay her, though he does not care the rind of a lemon for her all the while."

Now I could not bear to hear Jason giving out after this manner against the family, and twenty people standing by in the street. Ever since he had lived at the lodge of his own, he looked down, however, upon poor old Thady, and was grown quite a great gentleman, and had none of his relations near him; no wonder he was no kinder to poor Sir Condry than to his own kith or kin.^{xvi} In the spring it was the villain that got the list of the debts from him brought down the custodiam, Sir Condry still attending his duty in parliament, and I could scarcely believe my own old eyes, or the spectacles with which I read it, when I was shown my son Jason's name joined in the custodiam; but he told me it was only for form's sake, and to make things easier than if all the land was under the power of a total stranger. Well, I did not know what to think; it was hard to be talking ill of my own, and I could not but grieve for my poor master's fine estate, all torn by these vultures of the law; so I said nothing, but just looked on to see how it would all end.

It was not till the month of June that he and my lady came down to the country. My master was pleased to take me aside with him to the brewhouse that same evening, to complain to me of my son and other matters, in which he said he was confident I had neither art nor part; he said a great deal more to me, to whom he had been fond to

talk ever since he was my white-headed boy, before he came to the estate; and all that he said about poor Judy I can never forget, but scorn to repeat. He did not say an unkind word of my lady, but wondered, as well he might, her relations would do nothing for him or her, and they in all this great distress. He did not take any thing long to heart, let it be as it would, and had no more malice, or thought of the like in him, than a child that can't speak; this night it was all out of his head before he went to his bed. He took his jug of whiskey punch—my lady was grown quite easy about the whiskey punch by this time, and so I did suppose all was going on right betwixt them, till I learnt the truth through Mrs. Jane, who talked over their affairs to the housekeeper, and I within hearing. The night my master came home thinking of nothing at all but just making merry, he drank his bumper toast “to the deserts of that old curmudgeon my father-in-law, and all enemies at Mount Juliet’s town.” Now my lady was no longer in the mind she formerly was, and did no ways relish hearing her own friends abused in her presence, she said. “Then why don’t they show themselves your friends,” said my master, “and oblige me with the loan of the money I condescended, by your advice, my dear, to ask? It’s now three posts since I sent off my letter,²¹ desiring in the postscript a speedy answer by the return of the post, and no account at all from them yet.” “I expect they’ll write to *me* next post,” says my lady, and that was all that passed then; but it was easy from this to guess there was a coolness betwixt them, and with good cause.

The next morning, being post-day, I sent off the gossoon early to the post-office, to see was there any letter likely to set matters to rights, and he brought back one with the proper post-mark upon it, sure enough, and I had no time to examine, or make any conjecture more about it, for into the servants’ hall pops Mrs. Jane with a blue bandbox in her hand, quite entirely mad. “Dear ma’am, and what’s the matter?” says I. “Matter enough,” says she; “don’t you see my bandbox is wet through, and my best bonnet here spoiled, besides my lady’s, and all by the rain coming in through that gallery window, that you might have got mended, if you’d had any sense, Thady, all the time we were in town in the winter.” “Sure I could not get the glazier, ma’am,” says I. “You might have stopped it up any how,” says she. “So I did, ma’am, to the best of my ability; one of the panes

21. Ireland had daily mail service, or posts, from 1760, as did England and Scotland.

with the old pillow-case, and the other with a piece of the old stage green curtain; sure I was as careful as possible all the time you were away, and not a drop of rain came in at that window of all the windows in the house, all winter, ma'am, when under my care; and now the family's come home, and it's summer time, I never thought no more about it, to be sure; but dear, it's a pity to think of your bonnet, ma'am; but here's what will please you, ma'am, a letter from Mount Juliet's town for my lady." With that she snatches it from me without a word more, and runs up the back stairs to my mistress; I follows with a slate to make up the window. This window was in the long passage, or gallery, as my lady gave out orders to have it called, in the gallery leading to my master's bedchamber and hers. And when I went up with the slate, the door having no lock, and the bolt spoilt, was a-jar after Mrs. Jane, and as I was busy with the window, I heard all that was saying within.

"Well, what's in your letter, Bella, my dear?" says he: "you're a long time spelling it over." "Won't you shave this morning, Sir Condy?" says she, and put the letter into her pocket. "I shaved the day before yesterday," says he, "my dear, and that's not what I'm thinking of now; but any thing to oblige you, and to have peace and quietness, my dear"—and presently I had the glimpse of him at the cracked glass over the chimney-piece, standing up shaving himself to please my lady. But she took no notice, but went on reading her book, and Mrs. Jane doing her hair behind. "What is it you're reading there, my dear?—phoo, I've cut myself with this razor; the man's a cheat that sold it me, but I have not paid him for it yet: what is it you're reading there? Did you hear me asking you, my dear?" "The Sorrows of Werter,"²² replies my lady, as well as I could hear. "I think more of the sorrows of Sir Condy," says my master, joking like. "What news from Mount Juliet's town?" "No news," says she, "but the old story over again, my friends all reproaching me still for what I can't help now." "Is it for marrying me?" said my master, still

22. *The Sorrows of Young Werther* (1774, final version 1787), by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe; a short novel about a young man who, in Goethe's own words, "loses himself in fantastic dreams and undermines himself with speculative thought until finally, torn by hopeless passions, especially by infinite love, he shoots himself in the head" (RE, 948). McCormack suggests that "the intense emotion of Goethe's romance contrasts starkly with the disappointed mercenary base of the Rackrents' marriage" (110).

shaving: "what signifies, as you say, talking of that, when it can't be help'd now?"

With that she heaved a great sigh, that I heard plain enough in the passage. "And did not you use me basely, Sir Condy," says she, "not to tell me you were ruined before I married you?" "Tell you, my dear," said he; "did you ever ask me one word about it? And had not you friends enough of your own, that were telling you nothing else from morning to night, if you'd have listened to them slanders?" "No slanders, nor are my friends slanderers; and I can't bear to hear them treated with disrespect as I do," says my lady, and took out her pocket handkerchief; "they are the best of friends; and if I had taken their advice—. But my father was wrong to lock me up, I own; that was the only unkind thing I can charge him with; for if he had not locked me up, I should never have had a serious thought of running away as I did." "Well, my dear," said my master, "don't cry and make yourself uneasy about it now, when it's all over, and you have the man of your own choice, in spite of 'em all." "I was too young, I know, to make a choice at the time you ran away with me, I'm sure," says my lady, and another sigh, which made my master, half shaved as he was, turn round upon her in surprise. "Why, Bell," says he, "you can't deny what you know as well as I do, that it was at your own particular desire, and that twice under your own hand and seal expressed, that I should carry you off as I did to Scotland, and marry you there." "Well, say no more about it, Sir Condy," said my lady, pettish like—"I was a child then, you know." "And as far as I know, you're little better now, my dear Bella, to be talking in this manner to your husband's *face*; but I won't take it ill of you, for I know it's something in that letter you put into your pocket just now, that has set you against me all on a sudden, and imposed upon your understanding." "It is not so very easy as you think it, Sir Condy, to impose upon *my* understanding," said my lady. "My dear," says he, "I have, and with reason, the best opinion of your understanding of any man now breathing; and you know I have never set my own in competition with it till now, my dear Bella," says he, taking her hand from her book as kind as could be—"till now, when I have the great advantage of being quite cool, and you not; so don't believe one word your friends say against your own Sir Condy, and lend me the letter out of your pocket, till I see what it is they can have to say." "Take it then," says she, "and as you are quite cool, I hope it is a proper time to request you'll allow me to comply with the wishes of

all my own friends, and return to live with my father and family, during the remainder of my wretched existence, at Mount Juliet's town."

At this my poor master fell back a few paces, like one that had been shot. "You're not serious, Bella," says he; "and could you find it in your heart to leave me this way in the very middle of my distresses, all alone?" But recollecting himself after his first surprise, and a moment's time for reflection, he said, with a great deal of consideration for my lady, "Well, Bella, my dear, I believe you are right; for what could you do at Castle Rackrent, and an execution against the goods coming down, and the furniture to be canted, and an auction in the house all next week? So you have my full consent to go, since that is your desire, only you must not think of my accompanying you, which I could not in honour do upon the terms I always have been, since our marriage, with your friends; besides, I have business to transact at home; so in the mean time, if we are to have any breakfast this morning, let us go down and have it for the last time in peace and comfort, Bella."

Then as I heard my master coming to the passage door, I finished fastening up my slate against the broken pane; and when he came out, I wiped down the window seat with my wig,^{xvii} and bade him a good morrow as kindly as I could, seeing he was in trouble, though he strove and thought to hide it from me. "This window is all racked and tattered," says I, "and it's what I'm striving to mend." "It *is* all racked and tattered, plain enough," says he, "and never mind mending it, honest old Thady," says he; "it will do well enough for you and I, and that's all the company we shall have left in the house by-and-bye." "I'm sorry to see your honour so low this morning," says I; "but you'll be better after taking your breakfast." "Step down to the servants' hall," says he, "and bring me up the pen and ink into the parlour, and get a sheet of paper from Mrs. Jane, for I have business that can't brook to be delayed; and come into the parlour with the pen and ink yourself, Thady, for I must have you to witness my signing a paper I have to execute in a hurry." Well, while I was getting of the pen and ink-horn, and the sheet of paper, I ransacked my brains to think what could be the papers my poor master could have to execute in such a hurry, he that never thought of such a thing as doing business afore breakfast, in the whole course of his life, for any man living; but this was for my lady, as I afterwards found, and the more genteel of him after all her treatment.

I was just witnessing the paper that he had scrawled over, and was shaking the ink out of my pen upon the carpet, when my lady came into breakfast, and she started as if it had been a ghost! as well she might, when she saw Sir Condry writing at this unseasonable hour. "That will do very well, Thady," says he to me, and took the paper I had signed to, without knowing what upon the earth it might be, out of my hands, and walked, folding it up, to my lady.

"You are concerned in this, my Lady Rackrent," says he, putting it into her hands; "and I beg you'll keep this memorandum safe, and show it to your friends the first thing you do when you get home; but put it in your pocket now, my dear, and let us eat our breakfast, in God's name." "What is all this?" said my lady, opening the paper in great curiosity. "It's only a bit of a memorandum of what I think becomes me to do whenever I am able," says my master; "you know my situation, tied hand and foot at the present time being, but that can't last always, and when I'm dead and gone, the land will be to the good, Thady, you know; and take notice, it's my intention your lady should have a clear five hundred a year jointure off the estate afore any of my debts are paid." "Oh, please your honour," says I, "I can't expect to live to see that time, being now upwards of fourscore years of age,²³ and you a young man, and likely to continue so, by the help of God." I was vexed to see my lady so insensible too, for all she said was, "This is very genteel of you, Sir Condry. You need not wait any longer, Thady"; so I just picked up the pen and ink that had tumbled on the floor, and heard my master finish with saying, "You behaved very genteel to me, my dear, when you threw all the little you had in your own power along with yourself, into my hands; and as I don't deny but what you may have had some things to complain of,"—to be sure he was thinking then of Judy, or of the whiskey punch, one or t'other, or both,—"and as I don't deny but you may have had something to complain of, my dear, it is but fair you should have something in the form of compensation to look forward to agreeably in future; besides, it's an act of justice to myself, that none of your friends, my dear, may ever have it to say against me, I married for money, and not for love." "That is the last thing I should ever have thought of saying of you, Sir Condry," said

23. Eighty years old.

my lady, looking very gracious. "Then, my dear," said Sir Condry, "we shall part as good friends as we met; so all's right."

I was greatly rejoiced to hear this, and went out of the parlour to report it all to the kitchen. The next morning my lady and Mrs. Jane set out for Mount Juliet's town in the jaunting car:²⁴ many wondered at my lady's choosing to go away, considering all things, upon the jaunting car, as if it was only a party of pleasure; but they did not know, till I told them, that the coach was all broke in the journey down, and no other vehicle but the car to be had; besides, my lady's friends were to send their coach to meet her at the cross roads; so it was all done very proper.

My poor master was in great trouble after my lady left us. The execution came down; and every thing at Castle Rackrent was seized by the gripers,²⁵ and my son Jason, to his shame be it spoken, amongst them. I wondered, for the life of me, how he could harden himself to do it; but then he had been studying the law, and had made himself attorney Quirk; so he brought down at once a heap of accounts upon my master's head. To cash lent, and to ditto, and to ditto, and to ditto, and oats, and bills paid at the milliner's²⁶ and linen draper's, and many dresses for the fancy balls in Dublin for my lady, and all the bills to the workmen and tradesmen for the scenery of the theatre, and the chandler's²⁷ and grocer's bills, and tailor's, besides butcher's and baker's, and worse than all, the old one of that base wine merchant's, that wanted to arrest my poor master for the amount on the election day, for which amount Sir Condry afterwards passed his note of hand, bearing lawful interest from the date thereof; and the interest and compound interest was now mounted to a terrible deal on many other notes and bonds for money borrowed, and there was besides hush money to the sub-sheriffs, and

24. "A light, two-wheeled vehicle, popular in Ireland, now carrying four persons two on each side, either back to back (outside jaunting-car) or facing each other (inside jaunting-car), with a seat for the driver. Formerly made for a large number of passengers . . . and intended for gentlemen to go a pleasuring with their families, they drawing themselves; also known as "Irish car" (*OED*).

25. Those who "oppress people by extortionate or niggardly methods . . . distress or inflict pain . . ." (*OED*).

26. "A vendor of 'fancy' wares, and articles of apparel, especially of such as were originally of Milan manufacture; . . . a person (usually a woman) who makes up articles of female apparel, especially bonnets and other headgear" (*OED*).

27. Candle maker or seller.

sheets upon sheets of old and new attorneys' bills, with heavy balances, *as per former account furnished*, brought forward with interest thereon; then there was a powerful deal due to the crown for sixteen years' arrear of quit-rent²⁸ of the town-lands of Carrick-shaughlin, with driver's fees, and a compliment to the receiver every year for letting the quit-rent run on, to oblige Sir Condry, and Sir Kit afore him. Then there were bills for spirits and ribands at the election time, and the gentlemen of the committee's accounts unsettled, and their subscription never gathered; and there were cows to be paid for, with the smith and farrier's²⁹ bills to be set against the rent of the demesne,³⁰ with calf and hay money; then there was all the servants' wages, since I don't know when, coming due to them, and sums advanced for them by my son Jason for clothes, and boots, and whips, and odd moneys for sundries expended by them in journeys to town and elsewhere, and pocket-money for the master continually, and messengers and postage before his being a parliament man; I can't myself tell you what besides; but this I know, that when the evening came on the which Sir Condry had appointed to settle all with my son Jason, and when he comes into the parlour, and sees the sight of bills and load of papers all gathered on the great dining-table for him, he puts his hands before both his eyes, and cried out, "Merciful Jasus! what is it I see before me?" Then I sets an arm-chair at the table for him, and with a deal of difficulty he sits him down, and my son Jason hands him over the pen and ink to sign to this man's bill and t'other man's bill, all which he did without making the least objections. Indeed, to give him his due, I never *seen* a man more fair and honest, and easy in all his dealings, from first to last, as Sir Condry, or more willing to pay every man his own as far as he was able, which is as much as any one can do. "Well," says he, joking like with Jason, "I wish we could settle it all with a stroke of my grey goose quill. What signifies making me wade through all this ocean of papers here; can't you now, who understand drawing out an account, debtor and creditor, just sit down here at the corner of the table, and get it done out for me, that I may have a clear view of the balance, which is all I need be talking about, you know?" "Very true, Sir Condry; nobody understands business better than yourself,"

28. "A rent paid by the occupier in lieu of services rendered" (OCR, 128).

29. One who shoes horses.

30. "Possession (of real estate) as one's own" (OED); abode.

says Jason. "So I've a right to do, being born and bred to the bar," says Sir Condy. "Thady, do step out and see are they bringing in the things for the punch, for we've just done all we have to do for this evening." I goes out accordingly, and when I came back, Jason was pointing to the balance, which was a terrible sight to my poor master. "Pooh! pooh! pooh!" says he, "here's so many noughts they dazzle my eyes, so they do, and put me in mind of all I suffered, larning of my numeration table, when I was a boy at the day-school along with you, Jason—units, tens, hundreds, tens of hundred. Is the punch ready, Thady?" says he, seeing me. "Immediately; the boy has the jug in his hand; it's coming up stairs, please your honour, as fast as possible," says I, for I saw his honour was tired out of his life; but Jason, very short and cruel, cuts me off with—"Don't be talking of punch yet a while; it's no time for punch yet a bit—units, tens, hundreds," goes he on, counting over the master's shoulder, units, tens, hundreds, thousands. "A-a-ah! hold your hand," cries my master; "where in this wide world am I to find hundreds, or units itself, let alone thousands?" "The balance has been running on too long," says Jason, sticking to him as I could not have done at the time, if you'd have given both the Indies and Cork to boot;³¹ "the balance has been running on too long, and I'm distressed myself on your account, Sir Condy, for money, and the thing must be settled now on the spot, and the balance cleared off," says Jason. "I'll thank you if you'll only show me how," says Sir Condy. "There's but one way," says Jason, "and that's ready enough: when there's no cash, what can a gentleman do, but go to the land?" "How can you go to the land, and it under custodiam to yourself already," says Sir Condy, "and another custodiam hanging over it? And no one at all can touch it, you know, but the custodees." "Sure, can't you sell, though at a loss? Sure you can sell, and I've a purchaser ready for you," says Jason. "Have ye so?" said Sir Condy; "that's a great point gained; but there's a thing now beyond all, that perhaps you don't know yet,

31. Places where one could become wealthy through trade. India "provided a career for Irishmen of all classes" and experienced British imperialism through these men. One such man was Laurence Sullivan (1713–1786), who was born in County Cork and was influential in the doings of the East India Company from the 1750s until his death. Cork was a dynamic eighteenth-century port that excelled in commercial ventures throughout the Atlantic world and Europe by processing and supplying products to these markets (*OCIH*, 257).

barring Thady has let you into the secret.” “Sarrah bit³² of a secret, or any thing at all of the kind, has he learned from me these fifteen weeks come St. John’s eve,”³³ says I; “for we have scarce been upon speaking terms of late; but what is it your honour means of a secret?” “Why, the secret of the little keepsake I gave my Lady Rackrent the morning she left us, that she might not go back empty-handed to her friends.” “My Lady Rackrent, I’m sure, has baubles and keepsakes enough, as those bills on the table will show,” says Jason; “but whatever it is,” says he, taking up his pen, “we must add it to the balance, for to be sure it can’t be paid for.” “No, nor can’t till after my decease,” said Sir Condy; “that’s one good thing.” Then colouring up a good deal, he tells Jason of the memorandum of the five hundred a year jointure he had settled upon my lady; at which Jason was indeed mad, and said a great deal in very high words, that it was using a gentleman, who had the management of his affairs, and was moreover his principal creditor, extremely ill, to do such a thing without consulting him, and against his knowledge and consent. To all which Sir Condy had nothing to reply, but that upon his conscience, it was in a hurry and without a moment’s thought on his part, and he was very sorry for it, but if it was to do over again he would do the same; and he appealed to me, and I was ready to give my evidence, if that would do, to the truth of all he said.

So Jason with much ado was brought to agree to a compromise. “The purchaser that I have ready,” says he, “will be much displeased, to be sure, at the incumbrance on the land, but I must see and manage him; here’s a deed ready drawn up; we have nothing to do but to put in the consideration money and our names to it.” “And how much am I going to sell?—the lands of O’Shaughlin’s town, and the lands of Gruneaghoolaghan, and the lands of Crook-aglawaturgh,” says he, just reading to himself,—“and—Oh, murder, Jason! sure you won’t put this in—the castle stable, and appurtenances of Castle Rackrent.” “Oh, murder!” says I, clapping my hands, “this is too bad, Jason.” “Why so?” said Jason, “when it’s all, and a great deal more to the back of it, lawfully mine, was I to push for it.” “Look at him,” says I, pointing to Sir Condy, who was

32. Butler glosses this as “‘For Sorrow,’ euphemism for the Devil” (PCR, 350).

33. June 23, “the midsummer festival, when bonfires provided the focus for energetic communal festivities” (OCIH2, 70).

just leaning back in his arm-chair, with his arms falling beside him like one stupified; "is it you, Jason, that can stand in his presence, and recollect all he has been to us, and all we have been to him, and yet use him so at the last?" "Who will you find to use him better, I ask you?" said Jason; "if he can get a better purchaser, I'm content; I only offer to purchase, to make things easy and oblige him: though I don't see what compliment I am under, if you come to that; I have never had, asked, or charged more than sixpence in the pound, receiver's fees; and where would he have got an agent for a penny less?" "Oh, Jason! Jason! how will you stand to this in the face of the county and all who know you?" says I; "and what will people think and say, when they see you living here in Castle Rackrent, and the lawful owner turned out of the seat of his ancestors, without a cabin to put his head into, or so much as a potatoe to eat?" Jason, whilst I was saying this, and a great deal more, made me signs, and winks, and frowns; but I took no heed; for I was grieved and sick at heart for my poor master, and couldn't but speak.

"Here's the punch," says Jason, for the door opened; "here's the punch!" Hearing that, my master starts up in his chair, and recollects himself, and Jason uncorks the whiskey. "Set down the jug here," says he, making room for it beside the papers opposite to Sir Condry, but still not stirring the deed that was to make over all. Well, I was in great hopes he had some touch of mercy about him when I saw him making the punch, and my master took a glass; but Jason put it back as he was going to fill again, saying, "No, Sir Condry, it sha'n't be said of me, I got your signature to this deed when you were half-seas over: you know your name and hand-writing in that condition would not, if brought before the courts, benefit me a straw; wherefore let us settle all before we go deeper into the punch-bowl." "Settle all as you will," said Sir Condry, clapping his hands to his ears; "but let me hear no more; I'm bothered to death this night." "You've only to sign," said Jason, putting the pen to him. "Take all, and be content," said my master. So he signed; and the man who brought in the punch witnessed it, for I was not able, but crying like a child; and besides, Jason said, which I was glad of, that I was no fit witness, being so old and doting. It was so bad with me, I could not taste a drop of the punch itself, though my master himself, God bless him! in the midst of his trouble, poured out a glass for me, and brought it up to my lips. "Not a drop, I thank your honour's honour as much as if I took it though," and I just set down the glass as it was, and

went out, and when I got to the street-door, the neighbour's childer, who were playing at marbles there, seeing me in great trouble, left their play, and gathered about me to know what ailed me; and I told them all, for it was a great relief to me to speak to these poor childer, that seemed to have some natural feeling left in them: and when they were made sensible that Sir Condry was going to leave Castle Rackrent for good and all, they set up a whillalu that could be heard to the farthest end of the street; and one fine boy he was, that my master had given an apple to that morning, cried the loudest, but they all were the same sorry, for Sir Condry was greatly beloved amongst the childer, for letting them go a-nutting in the demesne, without saying a word to them, though my lady objected to them. The people in the town, who were the most of them standing at their doors, hearing the childer cry, would know the reason of it; and when the report was made known, the people one and all gathered in great anger against my son Jason, and terror at the notion of his coming to be landlord over them, and they cried, "No Jason! No Jason! Sir Condry! Sir Condry! Sir Condry Rackrent for ever!" and the mob grew so great and so loud, I was frightened, and made my way back to the house to warn my son to make his escape, or hide himself for fear of the consequences. Jason would not believe me till they came all round the house, and to the windows with great shouts: then he grew quite pale, and asked Sir Condry what had he best do? "I'll tell you what you'd best do," said Sir Condry, who was laughing to see his fright; "finish your glass first, then let's go to the window and show ourselves, and I'll tell 'em, or you shall, if you please, that I'm going to the Lodge for change of air for my health, and by my own desire, for the rest of my days." "Do so," said Jason, who never meant it should have been so, but could not refuse him the Lodge at this unseasonable time. Accordingly Sir Condry threw up the sash, and explained matters, and thanked all his friends, and bid 'em look in at the punch-bowl, and observe that Jason and he had been sitting over it very good friends; so the mob was content, and he sent 'em out some whiskey to drink his health, and that was the last time his honour's health was ever drunk at Castle Rackrent.

The very next day, being too proud, as he said, to me, to stay an hour longer in a house that did not belong to him, he sets off to the Lodge, and I along with him not many hours after. And there was great bemoaning through all O'Shaughlin's town, which I stayed to witness, and gave my poor master a full account of when I got to the

Lodge. He was very low and in his bed when I got there, and complained of a great pain about his heart, but I guessed it was only trouble, and all the business, let alone vexation, he had gone through of late; and knowing the nature of him from a boy, I took my pipe, and, whilst smoking it by the chimney, began telling him how he was beloved and regretted in the county, and it did him a deal of good to hear it. "Your honour has a great many friends yet, that you don't know of, rich and poor, in the county," says I; "for as I was coming along the road, I met two gentlemen in their own carriages, who asked after you, knowing me, and wanted to know where you was and all about you, and even how old I was: think of that." Then he wakened out of his dose, and began questioning me who the gentlemen were. And the next morning it came into my head to go, unknown to any body, with my master's compliments, round to many of the gentlemen's houses, where he and my lady used to visit, and people that I knew were his great friends, and would go to Cork to serve him any day in the year, and I made bold to try to borrow a trifle of cash from them. They all treated me very civil for the most part, and asked a great many questions very kind about my lady, and Sir Condry, and all the family, and were greatly surprised to learn from me Castle Rackrent was sold, and my master at the Lodge for health; and they all pitied him greatly, and he had their good wishes, if that would do, but money was a thing they unfortunately had not any of them at this time to spare. I had my journey for my pains, and I, not used to walking, nor supple as formerly, was greatly tired, but had the satisfaction of telling my master, when I got to the Lodge, all the civil things said by high and low.

"Thady," says he, "all you've been telling me brings a strange thought into my head; I've a notion I shall not be long for this world any how, and I've a great fancy to see my own funeral afore I die." I was greatly shocked, at the first speaking, to hear him speak so light about his funeral, and he, to all appearance, in good health, but recollecting myself, answered, "To be sure, it would be as fine a sight as one could see, I dared to say, and one I should be proud to witness, and I did not doubt his honour's would be as great a funeral as ever Sir Patrick O'Shaughlin's was, and such a one as that had never been known in the county afore or since." But I never thought he was in earnest about seeing his own funeral himself, till the next day he returns to it again. "Thady," says he, "as far as the wake^{xviiiG} goes, sure I might without any great trouble have the satisfaction of seeing a bit

of my own funeral." "Well, since your honour's honour's so bent upon it," says I, not willing to cross him, and he in trouble, "we must see what we can do." So he fell into a sort of a sham disorder, which was easy done, as he kept his bed, and no one to see him; and I got my shister, who was an old woman very handy about the sick, and very skilful, to come up to the Lodge, to nurse him; and we gave out, she knowing no better, that he was just at his latter end, and it answered beyond any thing; and there was a great throng of people, men, women, and childer, and there being only two rooms at the Lodge, except what was locked up full of Jason's furniture and things, the house was soon as full and fuller than it could hold, and the heat, and smoke, and noise wonderful great; and standing amongst them that were near the bed, but not thinking at all of the dead, I was started by the sound of my master's voice from under the great coats that had been thrown all at top, and I went close up, no one noticing. "Thady," says he, "I've had enough of this; I'm smothering, and can't hear a word of all they're saying of the deceased." "God bless you, and lie still and quiet," says I, "a bit longer, for my shister's afraid of ghosts, and would die on the spot with fright, was she to see you come to life all on a sudden this way without the least preparation." So he lays him still, though well nigh stifled, and I made all haste to tell the secret of the joke, whispering to one and t'other, and there was a great surprise, but not so great as we had laid out it would. "And aren't we to have the pipes and tobacco, after coming so far to-night?" said some; but they were all well enough pleased when his honour got up to drink with them, and sent for more spirits from a shebean-house,^{xix} where they very civilly let him have it upon credit. So the night passed off very merrily, but, to my mind, Sir Condry was rather upon the sad order in the midst of it all, not finding there had been such a great talk about himself after his death as he had always expected to hear.

The next morning, when the house was cleared of them, and none but my shister and myself left in the kitchen with Sir Condry, one opens the door, and walks in, and who should it be but Judy M'Quirk herself! I forgot to notice, that she had been married long since, whilst young captain Moneygawl lived at the Lodge, to the captain's huntsman, who after a whilst listed³⁴ and left her, and was

34. Enlisted in the military.

killed in the wars.³⁵ Poor Judy fell off greatly in her good looks after her being married a year or two; and being smoke-dried in the cabin,³⁶ and neglecting herself like, it was hard for Sir Condry himself to know her again till she spoke; but when she says, "It's Judy M'Quirk, please your honour, don't you remember her?" "Oh, Judy, is it you?" says his honour; "yes, sure, I remember you very well; but you're greatly altered, Judy." "Sure it's time for me," says she; "and I think your honour, since I *seen* you last,—but that's a great while ago,—is altered too." "And with reason, Judy," says Sir Condry, fetching a sort of a sigh; "but how's this, Judy?" he goes on; "I take it a little amiss of you, that you were not at my wake last night." "Ah, don't be being jealous of that," says she; "I didn't hear a sentence of your honour's wake till it was all over, or it would have gone hard with me but I would have been at it sure; but I was forced to go ten miles up the country three days ago to a wedding of a relation of my own's, and didn't get home till after the wake was over; but," says she, "it won't be so, I hope, the next time,^{xx} please your honour." "That we shall see, Judy," says his honour, "and may be sooner than you think for, for I've been very unwell this while past, and don't reckon any way I'm long for this world." At this, Judy takes up the corner of her apron, and puts it first to one eye and then to t'other, being to all appearance in great trouble; and my shister put in her word, and bid his honour have a good heart, for she was sure it was only the gout,³⁷ that Sir Patrick used to have flying about him, and he ought to drink a glass or a bottle extraordinary³⁸ to keep it out of his stomach; and he promised to take her advice, and sent out for more spirits immediately; and Judy made a sign to me, and I went over to the door to her, and she said, "I wonder to see Sir Condry so low! Has he heard the news?" "What news?" says I. "Didn't ye hear

35. Since the Glorious Revolution of 1688, Ireland has supported England in her wars. These would include the Seven Years War (1756–73) and the American Revolution. Irish Protestants began enlisting in 1745, and "Catholics were being recruited by the 1780s" (*OCIH*, 173, 276). Many Irish—especially Irish Catholics—also left Ireland during the eighteenth century to serve in foreign armies.

36. "Dried or cured by exposure to smoke" (*OED*).

37. "A condition that manifests itself as recurrent attacks of acute arthritis . . . [and the presence of] uric acid in the body. It may become chronic and deforming" (*CCE*, 350). Gout is associated with high living.

38. "Exceeding what is usual in amount, degree, extent, or size" (*OED*); a large bottle or glass.

it, then?" says she; "my Lady Rackrent that was is kilt^G and lying for dead, and I don't doubt but it's all over with her by this time." "Mercy on us all," says I; "how was it?" "The jaunting car it was that ran away with her," says Judy. "I was coming home that same time from Biddy M'Guggin's marriage, and a great crowd of people too upon the road, coming from the fair of Crookaghnawaturgh, and I sees a jaunting car standing in the middle of the road, and with the two wheels off and all tattered. 'What's this?' says I. 'Didn't ye hear of it?' says they that were looking on; 'it's my Lady Rackrent's car, that was running away from her husband, and the horse took fright at a carrion that lay across the road, and so ran away with the jaunting car, and my Lady Rackrent and her maid screaming, and the horse ran with them against a car that was coming from the fair, with the boy asleep on it, and the lady's petticoat hanging out of the jaunting car caught, and she was dragged I can't tell you how far upon the road, and it all broken up with the stones just going to be pounded, and one of the road-makers, with his sledge-hammer in his hand, stops the horse at the last; but my Lady Rackrent was all kilt and smashed,^{xxi} and they lifted her into a cabin hard by, and the maid was found after, where she had been thrown, in the gripe of the ditch,³⁹ her cap and bonnet all full of bog water, and they say my lady can't live any way.' Thady, pray now is it true what I'm told for sartain, that Sir Condy has made over all to your son Jason?" "All," says I. "All entirely?" says she again. "All entirely," says I. "Then," says she, "that's a great shame, but don't be telling Jason what I say." "And what is it you say?" cries Sir Condy, leaning over betwixt us, which made Judy start greatly. "I know the time when Judy M'Quirk would never have stayed so long talking at the door, and I in the house." "Oh!" says Judy, "for shame, Sir Condy; times are altered since then, and it's my Lady Rackrent you ought to be thinking of." "And why should I be thinking of her, that's not thinking of me now?" says Sir Condy. "No matter for that," says Judy, very properly; "it's time you should be thinking of her, if ever you mean to do it at all, for don't you know she's lying for death?" "My Lady Rackrent!" says Sir Condy, in a surprise; "why it's but two days since we parted, as you very well know, Thady, in her full health and spirits, and she and her maid along with her going to Mount Juliet's

39. "The 'clutch' or 'pinch' of something painful" (OED).

town on her jaunting car.” “She’ll never ride no more on her jaunting car,” said Judy, “for it has been the death of her, sure enough.” “And is she dead, then?” says his honour. “As good as dead, I hear,” says Judy; “but there’s Thady here has just learnt the whole truth of the story as I had it, and it is fitter he or any body else should be telling it you than I, Sir Condy: I must be going home to the childer.” But he stops her, but rather from civility in him, as I could see very plainly, than any thing else, for Judy was, as his honour remarked at her first coming in, greatly changed, and little likely, as far as I could see—though she did not seem to be clear of it herself—little likely to be my Lady Rackrent now, should there be a second toss-up to be made. But I told him the whole story out of the face, just as Judy had told it to me, and he sent off a messenger with his compliments to Mount Juliet’s town that evening, to learn the truth of the report, and Judy bid the boy that was going call in at Tim M’Enerney’s shop in O’Shaughlin’s town and buy her a new shawl. “Do so,” said Sir Condy, “and tell Tim to take no money from you, for I must pay him for the shawl myself.” At this my shister throws me over a look, and I says nothing, but turned the tobacco in my mouth, whilst Judy began making a many words about it, and saying how she could not be beholden for shawls to any gentleman. I left her there to consult with my shister, did she think there was any thing in it, and my shister thought I was blind to be asking her the question, and I thought my shister must see more into it than I did; and recollecting all past times and every thing, I changed my mind, and came over to her way of thinking, and we settled it that Judy was very like to be my Lady Rackrent after all, if a vacancy should have happened.

The next day, before his honour was up, somebody comes with a double knock at the door, and I was greatly surprised to see it was my son Jason. “Jason, is it you?” said I; “what brings you to the Lodge?” says I; “is it my Lady Rackrent? We know that already since yesterday.” “May be so,” says he, “but I must see Sir Condy about it.” “You can’t see him yet,” says I; “sure he is not awake.” “What then,” says he, “can’t he be wakened? and I standing at the door.” “I’ll not be disturbing his honour for you, Jason,” says I; “many’s the hour you’ve waited in your time, and been proud to do it, till his honour was at leisure to speak to you. His honour,” says I, raising my voice, at which his honour wakens of his own accord, and calls to me from the room to know who it was I was speaking to. Jason made no more ceremony, but follows me into the room. “How

are you, Sir Condyl?” says he; “I’m happy to see you looking so well; I came up to know how you did to-day, and to see did you want for any thing at the Lodge.” “Nothing at all, Mr. Jason, I thank you,” says he; for his honour had his own share of pride, and did not choose, after all that had passed, to be beholden, I suppose, to my son; “but pray take a chair and be seated, Mr. Jason.” Jason sat him down upon the chest, for chair there was none, and after he had sat there some time, and a silence on all sides, “What news is there stirring in the country, Mr. Jason M’Quirk?” says Sir Condyl very easy, yet high like. “None that’s news to you, Sir Condyl, I hear,” says Jason: “I am sorry to hear of my Lady Rackrent’s accident.” “I’m much obliged to you, and so is her ladyship, I’m sure,” answered Sir Condyl, still stiff; and there was another sort of a silence, which seemed to lie the heaviest on my son Jason.

“Sir Condyl,” says he at last, seeing Sir Condyl disposing himself to go to sleep again, “Sir Condyl, I dare say you recollect mentioning to me the little memorandum you gave to Lady Rackrent about the 500*l.* a-year jointure.” “Very true,” said Sir Condyl; “it is all in my recollection.” “But if my Lady Rackrent dies, there’s an end of all jointure,” says Jason. “Of course,” says Sir Condyl. “But it’s not a matter of certainty that my Lady Rackrent won’t recover,” says Jason. “Very true, sir,” says my master. “It’s a fair speculation, then, for you to consider what the chance of the jointure on those lands, when out of custodiam, will be to you.” “Just 500*l.* a-year, I take it, without any speculation at all,” said Sir Condyl. “That’s supposing the life dropt, and the custodiam off, you know; begging your pardon, Sir Condyl, who understands business, that is a wrong calculation.” “Very likely so,” said Sir Condyl; “but, Mr. Jason, if you have any thing to say to me this morning about it, I’d be obliged to you to say it, for I had an indifferent night’s rest last night, and wouldn’t be sorry to sleep a little this morning.” “I have only three words to say, and those more of consequence to you, Sir Condyl, than me. You are a little cool, I observe; but I hope you will not be offended at what I have brought here in my pocket,” and he pulls out two long rolls, and showers down golden guineas upon the bed. “What’s this?” said Sir Condyl; “it’s long since”—but his pride stops him. “All these are your lawful property this minute, Sir Condyl, if you please,” said Jason. “Not for nothing, I’m sure,” said Sir Condyl, and laughs a little—“nothing for nothing, or I’m under a mistake with you, Jason.” “Oh, Sir Condyl, we’ll not be indulging ourselves in any

unpleasant retrospects," says Jason; "it's my present intention to be-have, as I'm sure you will, like a gentleman in this affair. Here's two hundred guineas, and a third I mean to add, if you should think proper to make over to me all your right and title to those lands that you know of." "I'll consider of it," said my master; and a great deal more, that I was tired listening to, was said by Jason, and all that, and the sight of the ready cash upon the bed worked with his honour; and the short and the long of it was, Sir Condry gathered up the golden guineas, and tied them up in a handkerchief, and signed some paper Jason brought with him as usual, and there was an end of the business; Jason took himself away, and my master turned himself round and fell asleep again.

I soon found what had put Jason in such a hurry to conclude this business. The little gossoon we had sent off the day before with my master's compliments to Mount Juliet's town, and to know how my lady did after her accident, was stopped early this morning, coming back with his answer through O'Shaughlin's town, at Castle Rackrent, by my son Jason, and questioned of all he knew of my lady from the servant at Mount Juliet's town; and the gossoon told him my Lady Rackrent was not expected to live over night; so Jason thought it high time to be moving to the Lodge, to make his bargain with my master about the jointure afore it should be too late, and afore the little gossoon should reach us with the news. My master was greatly vexed, that is, I may say, as much as ever I *seen* him, when he found how he had been taken in; but it was some comfort to have the ready cash for immediate consumption in the house, any way.

And when Judy came up that evening, and brought the childer to see his honour, he unties the handkerchief, and, God bless him! whether it was little or much he had, 'twas all the same with him, he gives 'em all round guineas a-piece. "Hold up your head," says my shister to Judy, as Sir Condry was busy filling out a glass of punch for her eldest boy—"Hold up your head, Judy; for who knows but we may live to see you yet at the head of the Castle Rackrent estate?" "May be so," says she, "but not the way you are thinking of." I did not rightly understand which way Judy was looking when she makes this speech, till a-while after. "Why, Thady, you were telling me yesterday, that Sir Condry had sold all entirely to Jason, and where then does all them guineas in the handkerchief come from?" "They are the purchase-money of my lady's jointure," says I. Judy looks a little bit puzzled at this. "A penny for your thoughts, Judy," says my shister;

“hark, sure Sir Condry is drinking her health.” He was at the table in *the room*,^{xxii} drinking with the exciseman and the gauger,⁴⁰ who came up to see his honour, and we were standing over the fire in the kitchen. “I don’t much care is he drinking my health or not,” says Judy; “and it is not Sir Condry I’m thinking of, with all your jokes, whatever he is of me.” “Sure you wouldn’t refuse to be my Lady Rackrent, Judy, if you had the offer?” says I. “But if I could do better!” says she. “How better?” says I and my shister both at once. “How better?” says she; “why, what signifies it to be my Lady Rackrent, and no castle? Sure what good is the car, and no horse to draw it?” “And where will ye get the horse, Judy?” says I. “Never mind that,” says she; “may be it is your own son Jason might find that.” “Jason!” says I; “don’t be trusting to him, Judy. Sir Condry, as I have good reason to know, spoke well of you, when Jason spoke very indifferently of you, Judy.” “No matter,” says Judy; “it’s often men speak the contrary just to what they think of us.” “And you the same way of them, no doubt,” answers I. “Nay, don’t be denying it, Judy, for I think the better of ye for it, and shouldn’t be proud to call ye the daughter of a shister’s son of mine, if I was to hear ye talk ungrateful, and any way disrespectful of his honour.” “What disrespect,” says she, “to say I’d rather, if it was my luck, be the wife of another man?” “You’ll have no luck, mind my words, Judy,” says I; and all I remembered about my poor master’s goodness in tossing up for her afore he married at all came across me, and I had a choaking in my throat that hindered me to say more. “Better luck, any how, Thady,” says she, “than to be like some folk, following the fortunes of them that have none left.” “Oh! King of Glory!” says I, “hear the pride and ungratitude of her, and he giving his last guineas but a minute ago to her childer, and she with the fine shawl on her he made her a present of but yesterday!” “Oh, troth, Judy, you’re wrong now,” says my shister, looking at the shawl. “And was not he wrong yesterday, then,” says she, “to be telling me I was greatly altered, to affront me?” “But Judy,” says I, “what is it brings you here then at all in the mind you are in; is it to make Jason think the better of you?” “I’ll tell you no more of my secrets, Thady,” says she, “nor would have told you this much, had I taken you for such an unnatural fader as I find you are, not to wish your own son preferred

40. A gauger is an exciseman, “responsible for hiring men and controlling materials on public works” (McCormack, 101).

to another.” “Oh, troth, *you* are wrong now, Thady,” says my shister. Well, I was never so put to it in my life: between these womens, and my son and my master, and all I felt and thought just now, I could not, upon my conscience, tell which was the wrong from the right. So I said not a word more, but was only glad his honour had not the luck to hear all Judy had been saying of him, for I reckoned it would have gone nigh to break his heart; not that I was of opinion he cared for her as much as she and my shister fancied, but the ungratitude of the whole from Judy might not please him; and he could never stand the notion of not being well spoken of or beloved like behind his back. Fortunately for all parties concerned, he was so much elevated at this time, there was no danger of his understanding any thing, even if it had reached his ears. There was a great horn at the Lodge, ever since my master and Captain Moneygawl was in together, that used to belong originally to the celebrated Sir Patrick, his ancestor; and his honour was fond often of telling the story that he learned from me when a child, how Sir Patrick drank the full of this horn⁴¹ without stopping, and this was what no other man afore or since could without drawing breath. Now Sir Condy challenged the gauger, who seemed to think little of the horn, to swallow the contents, and had it filled to the brim with punch; and the gauger said it was what he could not do for nothing, but he’d hold Sir Condy a hundred guineas he’d do it. “Done,” says my master; “I’ll lay you a hundred golden guineas to a tester^{xxiii} you don’t.” “Done,” says the gauger; and done and done’s enough between two gentlemen. The gauger was cast, and my master won the bet, and thought he’d won a hundred guineas, but by the wording it was adjudged to be only a tester that was his due by the exciseman. It was all one to him; he was as well pleased, and I was glad to see him in such spirits again.

The gauger, bad luck to him! was the man that next proposed to my master to try himself could he take at a draught the contents of the great horn. “Sir Patrick’s horn!” said his honour; “hand it to me: I’ll hold you your own bet over again I’ll swallow it.” “Done,” says the gauger; “I’ll lay ye any thing at all you do no such thing.” “A hundred guineas to sixpence I do,” says he: “bring me the handkerchief.” I was loth, knowing he meant the handkerchief with the gold in it, to bring it out in such company, and his honour not very able to

41. A “vessel formed from the horn of a cow or other beast, or . . . shaped after this, for holding liquid” (OED).

reckon it. "Bring me the handkerchief, then, Thady," says he, and stamps with his foot; so with that I pulls it out of my great coat pocket, where I had put it for safety. Oh, how it grieved me to see the guineas counting upon the table, and they the last my master had! Says Sir Condry to me, "Your hand is steadier than mine to-night, old Thady, and that's a wonder; fill you the horn for me." And so, wishing his honour success, I did; but I filled it, little thinking of what would befall him. He swallows it down, and drops like one shot. We lifts him up, and he was speechless, and quite black in the face. We put him to bed, and in a short time he wakened, raving with a fever on his brain. He was shocking either to see or hear. "Judy! Judy! have you no touch of feeling? Won't you stay to help us nurse him?" says I to her, and she putting on her shawl to go out of the house. "I'm frightened to see him," says she, "and wouldn't nor couldn't stay in it; and what use? He can't last till the morning." With that she ran off. There was none but my shister and myself left near him of all the many friends he had. The fever came and went, and came and went, and lasted five days, and the sixth he was sensible for a few minutes, and said to me, knowing me very well, "I'm in burning pain all withinside of me, Thady." I could not speak, but my shister asked him would he have this thing or t'other to do him good? "No," says he, "nothing will do me good no more," and he gave a terrible screech with the torture he was in—then again a minute's ease—"brought to this by drink," says he; "where are all the friends?—Where's Judy?—Gone, hey? Ay, Sir Condry has been a fool all his days," said he; and there was the last word he spoke, and died. He had but a very poor funeral, after all.

If you want to know any more, I'm not very well able to tell you; but my Lady Rackrent did not die, as was expected of her, but was only disfigured in the face ever after by the fall and bruises she got; and she and Jason, immediately after my poor master's death, set about going to law about that jointure; the memorandum not being on stamped paper,⁴² some say it is worth nothing, others again it may do; others say, Jason won't have the lands at any rate; many wishes it so: for my part, I'm tired wishing for any thing in this world, after all I've seen in it—but I'll say nothing; it would be a folly to be getting myself ill-will in my old age. Jason did not marry,

42. Paper that had an "official mark or seal indicating genuineness, as in a notary's stamp" (*OED*).

nor think of marrying Judy, as I prophesied, and I am not sorry for it; who is? As for all I have here set down from memory and hearsay of the family, there's nothing but truth in it from beginning to end: that you may depend upon; for where's the use of telling lies about the things which every body knows as well as I do?

The Editor could have readily made the catastrophe of Sir Condy's history more dramatic and more pathetic, if he thought it allowable to varnish the plain round tale of faithful Thady. He lays it before the English reader as a specimen of manners and characters, which are, perhaps, unknown in England. Indeed, the domestic habits of no nation in Europe were less known to the English than those of their sister country, till within these few years.

Mr. Young's picture of Ireland,⁴³ in his tour through that country, was the first faithful portrait of its inhabitants. All the features in the foregoing sketch were taken from the life, and they are characteristic of that mixture of quickness, simplicity, cunning, carelessness, dissipation, disinterestedness, shrewdness, and blunder, which, in different forms, and with various success, has been brought upon the stage, or delineated in novels.

It is a problem of difficult solution to determine, whether an Union will hasten or retard the melioration of this country. The few gentlemen of education, who now reside in this country, will resort to England: they are few, but they are in nothing inferior to men of the same rank in Great Britain. The best that can happen will be the introduction of British manufacturers in their places.

Did the Warwickshire militia, who were chiefly artisans,⁴⁴ teach the Irish to drink beer? Or did they learn from the Irish to drink whiskey?

43. Arthur Young (1741–1820) was an agriculturalist, writer, and farmer who visited Ireland in 1776 and again from 1777–1779, publishing *A Tour of Ireland* in 1780. Maria Edgeworth described this work as “the most reliable portrait of the Irish peasantry ever printed” (OCIH2, 633).

44. Watson notes that “a number of English militia served in Ireland in the 1790s during the French wars” (OCR, 125), and Butler describes the Warwickshire militia in particular as “part of the large extra detachment of troops (some 80,000) diverted from the war with France to police Ireland in the 1790s” (PCR, 351).

Glossary.

Some friends, who have seen Thady's history since it has been printed, have suggested to the Editor, that many of the terms and idiomatic phrases, with which it abounds, could not be intelligible to the English reader without further explanation. The Editor has therefore furnished the following Glossary.

Page 8. *Monday morning*.—Thady begins his memoirs of the Rackrent Family by dating *Monday morning*, because no great undertaking can be auspiciously commenced in Ireland on any morning but *Monday morning*. “O, please God we live till Monday morning, we’ll set the slater to mend the roof of the house. On Monday morning we’ll fall to, and cut the turf. On Monday morning we’ll see and begin mowing. On Monday morning, please your honour, we’ll begin and dig the potatoes,” &c.

All the intermediate days, between the making of such speeches and the ensuing Monday, are wasted: and when Monday morning comes, it is ten to one that the business is deferred to *the next Monday morning*. The Editor knew a gentleman, who, to counteract this prejudice, made his workmen and labourers begin all new pieces of work upon a Saturday.

Page 9. *Let alone the three kingdoms itself*.—*Let alone*, in this sentence, means *put out of consideration*. The phrase, *let alone*, which is now used as the imperative of a verb, may in time become a conjunction, and may exercise the ingenuity of some future etymologist. The celebrated Horne Tooke¹ has proved most satisfactorily, that the conjunction *but* comes from the imperative of the

1. John Horne Tooke (1736–1812), English politician. Born John Horne, who studied law and in 1782 took the name of Tooke after a wealthy Mr. Tooke of Purley gave him £8,000 and his support in recognition of his arguments against an enclosure bill. He was tried for high treason in 1794, but acquitted (CBD, 1335).

Anglo-Saxon very (*beoutan*) *to be out*; also, that *if* comes from *gift*, the imperative of the Anglo-Saxon verb which signifies *to give*, &c.

Page 10. *Whillaluh*.—Ullaloo, Gol, or lamentation over the dead—

“Magnoque ululante tumultu.”—VIRGIL.

“Ululatibus omne

Implevere nemus.”—OVID.

A full account of the Irish Gol, or Ullaloo, and of the Caoinan or Irish funeral song, with its first semichorus, second semichorus, full chorus of sighs and groans, together with the Irish words and music, may be found in the fourth volume of the transactions of the Royal Irish Academy.² For the advantage of *lazy* readers, who would rather read a page than walk a yard, and from compassion, not to say sympathy, with their infirmity, the Editor transcribes the following passages:

“The Irish have been always remarkable for their funeral lamentations, and this peculiarity has been noticed by almost every traveller who visited them; and it seems derived from their Celtic ancestors, the primæval inhabitants of this isle. * *

“It has been affirmed of the Irish, that to cry was more natural to them than to any other nation, and at length the Irish cry became proverbial. *

“Cambrensis in the twelfth century says, the Irish then musically expressed their griefs; that is, they applied the musical art, in which they excelled all others, to the orderly celebration of funeral obsequies, by dividing the mourners into two bodies, each alternately singing their part, and the whole at times joining in full chorus.

* * * * * The body of the deceased, dressed in grave clothes, and ornamented with flowers, was placed on a bier, or some elevated spot. The relations and keepers (*singing mourners*) ranged themselves in two divisions, one at the head, and the other at the feet of the corpse. The bards³ and croteries had before prepared

2. The RIA was founded in 1785, in Dublin, and made up of clergy, scholars, noblemen, gentlemen, judges, and government officials; its interests were wide ranging, and it published on many aspects of Irish studies. Its annual publication, *Transactions*, was published from 1787 on, so the fourth volume would have been published in 1791 (OCIH2, 518; OCR, x).

3. Bards “earned rich rewards for singing poems in praise of their patrons, or satires against their patrons’ enemies.” In addition, the bard sometimes moved from celebrating his patron’s deeds to rendering the virtues of his patron’s relatives, including

the funeral Caoinan. The chief bard of the head chorus began by singing the first stanza in a low, doleful tone, which was softly accompanied by the harp: at the conclusion, the foot semichorus began the lamentation, or Ullaloo, from the final note of the preceding stanza, in which they were answered by the head semichorus; then both united in one general chorus. The chorus of the first stanza being ended, the chief bard of the foot semichorus began the second Gol or lamentation, in which he was answered by that of the head; and then, as before, both united in the general full chorus. Thus alternately were the song and choruses performed during the night. The genealogy, rank, possessions, the virtues and vices of the dead were rehearsed, and a number of interrogations were addressed to the deceased; as, Why did he die? If married, whether his wife was faithful to him, his sons dutiful, or good hunters or warriors? If a woman, whether her daughters were fair or chaste? If a young man, whether he had been crossed in love; or if the blue-eyed maids of Erin treated him with scorn?"

We are told, that formerly the feet (the metrical feet) of the Caoinan were much attended to; but on the decline of the Irish bards these feet were gradually neglected, and the Caoinan fell into a sort of slipshod metre amongst women. Each province had different Caoinans, or at least different imitations of the original. There was the Munster cry, the Ulster cry, &c. It became an extempore performance, and every set of keepers varied the melody according to their own fancy.

It is curious to observe how customs and ceremonies degenerate. The present Irish cry, or howl, cannot boast of such melody, nor is the funeral procession conducted with much dignity. The crowd of people who assemble at these funerals sometimes amounts to a thousand, often to four or five hundred. They gather as the bearers of the hearse proceed on their way, and when they pass through any village, or when they come near any houses, they begin to cry—Oh! Oh! Oh! Oh! Agh! Agh! raising their notes from the first *Oh!* to the last *Agh!* in a kind of mournful howl. This gives notice to the inhabitants of the village that a *funeral is passing*, and immediately they flock out to follow it. In the province of Munster it is a common thing for the women to follow a funeral, to join in the universal cry with all their might and main for some time, and then to turn and

wives, mothers, and grandmothers, who are "normally unrecorded in formal genealogies" (OCIH2, 40).

ask—"Arrah! who is it that's dead?—who is it we're crying for?" Even the poorest people have their own burying-places, that is, spots of ground in the church-yards, where they say that their ancestors have been buried ever since the wars of Ireland;⁴ and if these burial-places are ten miles from the place where a man dies, his friends and neighbours take care to carry his corpse thither. Always one priest, often five or six priests, attend these funerals; each priest repeats a mass, for which he is paid, sometimes a shilling, sometimes half-a-crown, sometimes half-a-guinea, or a guinea, according to their circumstances, or, as they say, according to the *ability* of the deceased. After the burial of any very poor man, who has left a widow or children, the priest makes what is called a *collection* for the widow; he goes round to every person present, and each contributes sixpence or a shilling, or what they please. The reader will find in the note upon the word *Wake*, p. 80, more particulars respecting the conclusion of the Irish funerals.

Certain old women, who cry particularly loud and well, are in great request, and, as a man said to the Editor, "Every one would wish and be proud to have such at his funeral, or at that of his friends." The lower Irish are wonderfully eager to attend the funerals of their friends and relations, and they make their relationships branch out to a great extent. The proof that a poor man has been well beloved during his life is his having a crowded funeral. To attend a neighbour's funeral is a cheap proof of humanity, but it does not, as some imagine, cost nothing. The time spent in attending funerals may be safely valued at half a million to the Irish nation; the Editor thinks that double that sum would not be too high an estimate. The habits of profligacy and drunkenness, which are acquired at *wakes*, are here put out of the question. When a labourer, a carpenter, or a smith, is not at his work, which frequently happens, ask where he is gone, and ten to one the answer is—"Oh faith, please your honour, he couldn't do a stroke to-day, for he's gone to *the* funeral."

Even beggars, when they grow old, go about begging for *their own funerals*; that is, begging for money to buy a coffin, candles, pipes, and tobacco. For the use of the candles, pipes, and tobacco, see *Wake*.

4. Probably refers to the Williamite Wars, fought from 1689–1691 between supporters of exiled James II and those of William III, whose victory at the Battle of Boyne in 1690 gave William the edge. These wars amounted to Irish civil wars and "confirm[ed] the Protestant dominance of Irish society already established at the Restoration" of Charles II (*OCIH*, 592–3).

Those who value customs in proportion to their antiquity, and nations in proportion to their adherence to ancient customs, will, doubtless, admire the Irish *Ullaloo*, and the Irish nation, for persevering in this usage from time immemorial. The Editor, however, has observed some alarming symptoms, which seem to prognosticate the declining taste for the *Ullaloo* in Ireland. In a comic theatrical entertainment, represented not long since on the Dublin stage, a chorus of old women was introduced, who set up the Irish howl round the relics of a physician, who is supposed to have fallen under the wooden sword of Harlequin.⁵ After the old women have continued their *Ullaloo* for a decent time, with all the necessary accompaniments of wringing their hands, wiping or rubbing their eyes with the corners of their gowns or aprons, &c. one of the mourners suddenly suspends her lamentable cries, and, turning to her neighbour, asks, “Arrah now, honey, who is it we’re crying for?”

Page 11. *The tenants were sent away without their whiskey*.—It is usual with some landlords to give their inferior tenants a glass of whiskey when they pay their rents. Thady calls it *their* whiskey; not that the whiskey is actually the property of the tenants, but that it becomes their *right* after it has been often given to them. In this general mode of reasoning respecting *rights* the lower Irish are not singular, but they are peculiarly quick and tenacious in claiming these rights. “Last year your honour gave me some straw for the roof of my house, and I *expect* your honour will be after doing the same this year.” In this manner gifts are frequently turned into tributes. The high and low are not always dissimilar in their habits. It is said, that the Sublime Ottoman Porte⁶ is very apt to claim gifts as tributes: thus it is dangerous to send the Grand Seignor a fine horse on his birthday one year, lest on his next birthday he should expect a similar present, and should proceed to demonstrate the reasonableness of his expectations.

5. Harlequin was “one of the principal stock characters of the Italian *commedia dell’arte*.” Early in the sixteenth century, one incarnation of this figure was the *zanni*, a “wily and covetous comic servant, . . . cowardly, superstitious,” hungry and poor. By the early seventeenth century, this figure had metamorphosed into the faithful servant, “patient, credulous, and amorous, . . . amoral without being vicious, and unlike his fellow *commedia* servants, he did not hold a grudge or seek revenge against those who tricked or cheated him” (*EB*, 5:78).

6. Signifies the government offices of the Ottoman Empire. “Sublime Porte” is the French translation of the Turkish term for “High Gate,” the name of the gate giving access to the state offices in Constantinople (Istanbul) (*EB*, 11:342).

Page 11. *He demeaned himself greatly*—means, he lowered or disgraced himself much.

Page 12. *Duty fowls, and duty turkies, and duty geese.*—In many leases in Ireland, tenants were *formerly* bound to supply an inordinate quantity of poultry to their landlords. The Editor knew of thirty turkies being reserved in one lease of a small farm.

Page 12. *English tenants.*—An English tenant does not mean a tenant who is an Englishman, but a tenant who pays his rent the day that it is due. It is a common prejudice in Ireland, amongst the poorer classes of people, to believe that all tenants in England pay their rents on the very day when they become due. An Irishman, when he goes to take a farm, if he wants to prove to his landlord that he is a substantial man, offers to become an *English tenant*. If a tenant disobliges his landlord by voting against him, or against his opinion, at an election, the tenant is immediately informed by the agent, that he must become an *English tenant*. This threat does not imply that he is to change his language or his country, but that he must pay all the arrear of rent which he owes, and that he must thenceforward pay his rent on that day when it becomes due.

Page 12. *Canting*—does not mean talking or writing hypocritical nonsense, but selling substantially by auction.

Page 13. *Duty work.*—It was formerly common in Ireland to insert clauses in leases, binding tenants to furnish their landlords with labourers and horses for several days in the year. Much petty tyranny and oppression have resulted from this feudal custom. Whenever a poor man disobliged his landlord, the agent sent to him for his duty work, and Thady does not exaggerate when he says, that the tenants were often called from their own work to do that of their landlord. Thus the very means of earning their rent were taken from them: whilst they were getting home their landlord's harvest, their own was often ruined, and yet their rents were expected to be paid as punctually as if their time had been at their own disposal. This appears the height of absurd injustice.

In Esthonia, amongst the poor Sclavonian race of peasant slaves, they pay tributes to their lords, not under the name of duty work, duty geese, duty turkies, &c., but under the name of *righteousnesses*. The following ballad is a curious specimen of Esthonian poetry:—

“This is the cause that the country is ruined,
And the straw of the thatch is eaten away,
The gentry are come to live in the land—
Chimneys between the village,
And the proprietor upon the white floor!
The sheep brings forth a lamb with a white forehead,
This is paid to the lord for a *righteousness sheep*.
The sow farrows pigs,
They go to the spit of the lord.
The hen lays eggs,
They go into the lord’s frying-pan.
The cow drops a male calf,
That goes into the lord’s herd as a bull.
The mare foals a horse foal,
That must be for my lord’s nag.
The boor’s wife has sons,
They must go look after my lord’s poultry.”

Page 13. *Out of forty-nine suits which he had, he never lost one but seventeen.*—Thady’s language in this instance is a specimen of a mode of rhetoric common in Ireland. An astonishing assertion is made in the beginning of a sentence, which ceases to be in the least surprising, when you hear the qualifying explanation that follows. Thus a man who is in the last stage of staggering drunkenness will, if he can articulate, swear to you—“Upon his conscience now, and may he never stir from the spot alive if he is telling a lie, upon his conscience he has not tasted a drop of any thing, good or bad, since morning at-all-at-all, but half a pint of whiskey, please your honour.”

Page 14. *Fairy Mounts*—Barrows. It is said that these high mounts were of great service to the natives of Ireland when Ireland was invaded by the Danes.⁷ Watch was always kept on them, and upon the approach of an enemy a fire was lighted to give notice to

7. From the ninth century on, for 200 years, the Norwegian Vikings invaded Ireland by crossing the Irish Sea. They were much feared, but were replaced in 851 after a huge naval battle at Carlingford Lough by their “Danish kinsmen, who proved just as anxious as their predecessors to relieve monasteries of their treasures” (*SHI*, 28–9). Brian Boru, the high king of Southern Ireland at the end of the tenth century, united the peoples living in Ireland and defeated the Danes, driving them out of Ireland.

the next watch, and thus the intelligence was quickly communicated through the country. *Some years ago*, the common people believed that these barrows were inhabited by fairies, or, as they called them, by the *good people*. “O troth, to the best of my belief, and to the best of my judgment and opinion,” said an elderly man to the Editor, “it was only the old people that had nothing to do, and got together, and were telling stories about them fairies, but to the best of my judgment there’s nothing in it. Only this I heard myself not very many years back from a decent kind of a man, a grazier, that as he was coming just *fair and easy* (*quietly*) from the fair, with some cattle and sheep, that he had not sold, just at the church of —, at an angle of the road like, he was met by a good-looking man, who asked him where he was going? And he answered, ‘Oh, far enough, I must be going all night.’ ‘No, that you mustn’t nor won’t (says the man), you’ll sleep with me the night, and you’ll want for nothing, nor your cattle nor sheep neither, nor your *beast* (*horse*); so come along with me.’ With that the grazier *lit* (*alighted*) from his horse, and it was dark night; but presently he finds himself, he does not know in the wide world how, in a fine house, and plenty of every thing to eat and drink; nothing at all wanting that he could wish for or think of. And he does not *mind* (*recollect* or *know*) how at last he falls asleep; and in the morning he finds himself lying, not in ever a bed or a house at all, but just in the angle of the road where first he met the strange man: there he finds himself lying on his back on the grass, and all his sheep feeding as quiet as ever all round about him, and his horse the same way, and the bridle of the beast over his wrist. And I asked him what he thought of it; and from first to last he could think of nothing, but for certain sure it must have been the fairies that entertained him so well. For there was no house to see any where nigh hand, or any building, or barn, or place at all, but only the church and the *mote* (*barrow*). There’s another odd thing enough that they tell about this same church, that if any person’s corpse, that had not a right to be buried in that church-yard, went to be burying there in it, no, not all the men, women, or childer in all Ireland could get the corpse any way into the church-yard; but as they would be trying to go into the church-yard, their feet would seem to be going backwards instead of forwards; ay, continually backwards the whole funeral would seem to go; and they would never set foot with the corpse in the church-yard. Now they say that it is the fairies do all this; but it is my opinion it is all idle talk, and people are after being wiser now.”

The country people in Ireland certainly *had* great admiration mixed with reverence, if not dread, of fairies. They believed that beneath these fairy mounts were spacious subterraneous palaces, inhabited by *the good people*, who must not on any account be disturbed. When the wind raises a little eddy of dust upon the road, the poor people believe that it is raised by the fairies, that it is a sign that they are journeying from one of the fairies' mounts to another, and they say to the fairies, or to the dust as it passes, "God speed ye, gentlemen; God speed ye." This averts any evil that *the good people* might be inclined to do them. There are innumerable stories told of the friendly and unfriendly feats of these busy fairies; some of these tales are ludicrous, and some romantic enough for poetry. It is a pity that poets should lose such convenient, though diminutive machinery.⁸ By-the-bye, Parnel,⁹ who showed himself so deeply "skilled in faerie lore," was an Irishman; and though he has presented his fairies to the world in the ancient English dress of "Britain's isle, and Arthur's days,"¹⁰ it is probable that his first acquaintance with them began in his native country.

Some remote origin for the most superstitious or romantic popular illusions or vulgar errors may often be discovered. In Ireland, the old churches and church-yards have been usually fixed upon as the scenes of wonders. Now the antiquarians tell us, that near the ancient churches in that kingdom caves of various constructions have from time to time been discovered, which were formerly used as granaries or magazines by the ancient inhabitants, and as places to which they retreated in time of danger. There is (p. 84 of the R.I.A. Transactions for 1789) a particular account of a number of these artificial caves at the west end of the church of Killossy, in the county of Kildare. Under a rising ground, in a dry sandy soil, these subterraneous dwellings were found: they have pediment roofs, and they

8. "The supernatural agents in epic action" (NA, 2525).

9. Thomas Parnell (1679–1718), Irish poet, essayist, friend of Alexander Pope, and member of the Scriblerus Club with Swift and Gay (EB, 9:166).

10. While there are references to a "real" Arthur in British poetry as early as the seventh century, and in the ninth-century *Historia Brittonum*, leading British forces to victory over the Anglo-Saxons, the figure of King Arthur was developed in the ninth and tenth centuries by the Welsh as a nationalist device, a "Welsh victor" when Wales needed a leader against the English. In the 1130s, Geoffrey of Monmouth describes King Arthur in the fictional *History of the Kings of Britain* as an "ideal king," as does Malory in his 1485 *Morte D'Arthur* (OCBH, 52–3).

communicate with each other by small apertures. In the Brehon laws¹¹ these are mentioned, and there are fines inflicted by those laws upon persons who steal from the subterraneous granaries. All these things show that there was a real foundation for the stories which were told of the appearance of lights, and of the sounds of voices near these places. The persons who had property concealed there very willingly countenanced every wonderful relation that tended to make these places objects of sacred awe or superstitious terror.

Page 14. *Weed-ashes*.—By ancient usage in Ireland, all the weeds on a farm belonged to the farmer's wife, or to the wife of the squire who holds the ground in his own hands. The great demand for alkaline salts in bleaching rendered these ashes no inconsiderable perquisite.

Page 14. *Sealing money*.—Formerly it was the custom in Ireland for tenants to give the squire's lady from two to fifty guineas as a perquisite upon the sealing of their leases. The Editor not very long since knew of a baronet's lady accepting fifty guineas as sealing money, upon closing a bargain for a considerable farm.

Page 15. *Sir Murtagh grew mad*.—Sir Murtagh grew angry.

Page 15. *The whole kitchen was out on the stairs*—means that all the inhabitants of the kitchen came out of the kitchen, and stood upon the stairs. These, and similar expressions, show how much the Irish are disposed to metaphor and amplification.

Page 17. *Fining down the yearly rent*.—When an Irish gentleman, like Sir Kit Rackrent, has lived beyond his income, and finds himself distressed for ready money, tenants obligingly offer to take his land at a rent far below the value, and to pay him a small sum or money in hand, which they call fining down the yearly rent. The temptation of this ready cash often blinds the landlord to his future interest.

11. From the Irish "brethem," meaning "a judge," this refers to the "system of law in use in Gaelic Ireland." With regard to inheritance of land, kin-land must be passed from one generation to the next via strict laws, though most land was owned by the kin-group (OCIH2, 60, 320–4).

Page 17. *Driver*.—A man who is employed to drive tenants for rent; that is, to drive the cattle belonging to tenants to pound.¹² The office of driver is by no means a sinecure.

Page 17. *I thought to make him a priest*.—It was customary amongst those of Thady's rank in Ireland, whenever they could get a little money, to send their sons abroad to St. Omer's, or to Spain,¹³ to be educated as priests. Now they are educated at Maynooth. The Editor has lately known a young lad, who began by being a post-boy,¹⁴ afterwards turn into a carpenter, then quit his plane and work-bench to study his *Humanities*, as he said, at the college of Maynooth; but after he had gone through his course of *Humanities*, he determined to be a soldier instead of a priest.

Page 19. *Flam*.—Short for flambeau.

Page 20. *Barrack-room*.—Formerly it was customary, in gentlemen's houses in Ireland, to fit up one large bedchamber with a number of beds for the reception of occasional visitors. These rooms were called Barrack-rooms.

Page 20. *An innocent*—in Ireland, means a simpleton, an idiot.

Page 25. *The Curragh*—is the Newmarket of Ireland.

Page 25. *The cant*.—The auction.

Page 29. *And so should cut him off for ever, by levying a fine, and suffering a recovery to dock the entail*.—The English reader may perhaps be surprised at the extent of Thady's legal knowledge, and at the fluency with which he pours forth law-terms; but almost every

12. "An enclosure maintained by authority, for the detention of stray or trespassing cattle as well as for keeping of distrained cattle or goods until redeemed; a pinfold" (*OED*).

13. "St. Omer's, near Calais, was the nearest seminary in which English-speaking Catholic boys could be trained for the priesthood during the eighteenth century. After the relaxation of some of the penal laws against Catholics in 1793, St. Patrick's College, Maynooth, Co. Kildare, was opened in 1795" (PCR, 352). "Prosperous Catholic families continued to evade the prohibition on 'foreign education' by sending their children to colleges in France, Spain, Italy, and the Netherlands" (*OCIH2*, 525).

14. Either a letter carrier or a postilion who rides at the back of a carriage.

poor man in Ireland, be he farmer, weaver, shopkeeper, or steward, is, beside his other occupations, occasionally a lawyer. The nature of processes, ejectments, custodiams, injunctions, replevins, &c. is perfectly known to them, and the terms as familiar to them as to any attorney. They all love law. It is a kind of lottery, in which every man, staking his own wit or cunning against his neighbour's property, feels that he has little to lose, and much to gain.

"I'll have the law of you, so I will!" is the saying of an Englishman who expects justice. "I'll have you before his honour" is the threat of an Irishman who hopes for partiality. Miserable is the life of a justice of the peace in Ireland the day after a fair, especially if he resides near a small town. The multitude of the *kilt* (*kilt* does not mean *killed*, but hurt) and wounded who come before his honour with black eyes or bloody heads is astonishing: but more astonishing is the number of those who, though they are scarcely able by daily labour to procure daily food, will nevertheless, without the least reluctance, waste six or seven hours of the day lounging in the yard or hall of a justice of the peace, waiting to make some complaint about—nothing. It is impossible to convince them that *time is money*. They do not set any value upon their own time, and they think that others estimate theirs at less than nothing. Hence they make no scruple of telling a justice of the peace a story of an hour long about a *tester* (sixpence); and if he grows impatient, they attribute it to some secret prejudice which he entertains against them.

Their method is to get a story completely by heart, and to tell it, as they call it, *out of the face*, that is, from the beginning to the end, without interruption.

"Well, my good friend, I have seen you lounging about these three hours in the yard; what is your business?"

"Please your honour, it is what I want to speak one word to your honour."

"Speak then, but be quick.—What is the matter?"

"The matter, please your honour, is nothing at-all-at-all, only just about the grazing of a horse, please your honour, that this man here sold me at the fair of Gurtishannon last Shrove fair,¹⁵ which lay down three times with myself, please your honour, and *kilt* me; not to be telling your honour of how, no later back than yesterday night, he lay down in the house there within, and all the childer standing

15. Shrovetide is the three days before Ash Wednesday; Shrove Tuesday is the last day of Shrovetide. Fairs were often held on saints' feast days or religious holidays, or a few days after.

round, and it was God's mercy he did not fall a-top of them, or into the fire to burn himself. So, please your honour, to-day I took him back to this man, which owned him, and after a great deal to do I got the mare again I *swopped* (*exchanged*) him for; but he won't pay the grazing of the horse for the time I had him, though he promised to pay the grazing in case the horse din't answer; and he never did a day's work, good or bad, please your honour, all the time he was with me, and I had the doctor to him five times any how. And so, please your honour, it is what I expect your honour will stand my friend, for I'd sooner come to your honour for justice than to any other in all Ireland. And so I brought him here before your honour, and expect your honour will make him pay me the grazing, or tell me, can I process him for it at the next assizes, please your honour?"

The defendant now turning a quid of tobacco with his tongue into some secret cavern in his mouth, begins his defence with—

"Please your honour, under favour, and saving your honour's presence, there's not a word of truth in all this man has been saying from beginning to end, upon my conscience, and I wouldn't, for the value of the horse itself, grazing and all, be after telling your honour a lie. For, please your honour, I have a dependance upon your honour that you'll do me justice, and not be listening to him or the like of him. Please your honour, it's what he has brought me before your honour, because he had a spite against me about some oats I sold your honour, which he was jealous of, and a shawl his wife got at my shister's shop there without, and never paid for; so I offered to set the shawl against the grazing, and give him a receipt in full of all demands, but he wouldn't out of spite, please your honour; so he brought me before your honour, expecting your honour was mad with me for cutting down the tree in the horse park, which was none of my doing, please your honour—ill luck to them that went and belied me to your honour behind my back! So if your honour is pleasing, I'll tell you the whole truth about the horse that he swopped against my mare out of the face. Last Shrove fair I met this man, Jemmy Duffy, please your honour, just at the corner of the road, where the bridge is broken down, that your honour is to have the presentment¹⁶ for this year—long life to you for it! And he was at that time coming from the fair of Gurtishannon, and I the same way. 'How are you, Jemmy?' says I. 'Very well, I thank ye, kindly Bryan,' says he; 'shall we turn back to Paddy Salmon's and take a naggin of

16. The justice of the peace will make a formal report of the broken bridge to the appropriate authorities (*OED*).

whiskey¹⁷ to our better acquaintance?’ ‘I don’t care if I did, Jemmy,’ says I; ‘only it is what I can’t take the whiskey, because I’m under an oath against it for a month.’ Ever since, please your honour, the day your honour met me on the road, and observed to me I could hardly stand, I had taken so much; though upon my conscience your honour wronged me greatly that same time—ill luck to them that belied me behind my back to your honour! Well, please your honour, as I was telling you, as he was taking the whiskey, and we talking of one thing or t’other, he makes me an offer to swop his mare that he couldn’t sell at the fair of Gurtishannon, because nobody would be troubled with the beast, please your honour, against my horse, and to oblige him I took the mare—sorrow take her! and him along with her! She kicked me a new car, that was worth three pounds ten, to tatters the first time I ever put her into it, and I expect your honour will make him pay me the price of the car, any how, before I pay the grazing, which I’ve no right to pay at-all-at-all, only to oblige him. But I leave it all to your honour; and the whole grazing he ought to be charging for the beast is but two and eightpence halfpenny, any how, please your honour. So I’ll abide by what your honour says, good or bad. I’ll leave it all to your honour.”

I’ll leave *it* all to your honour—literally means, I’ll leave all the trouble to your honour.

The Editor knew a justice of the peace in Ireland, who had such a dread of *having it all left to his honour*, that he frequently gave the complainants the sum about which they were disputing, to make peace between them, and to get rid of the trouble of hearing their stories *out of the face*. But he was soon cured of this method of buying off disputes, by the increasing multitude of those who, out of pure regard to his honour, came “to get justice from him, because they would sooner come before him than before any man in all Ireland.”

Page 38. *A raking pot of tea*.—We should observe, this custom has long since been banished from the higher orders of Irish gentry. The mysteries of a raking pot of tea, like those of the Bona Dea, are supposed to be sacred to females; but now and then it has happened, that some of the male species, who were either more audacious or more highly favoured than the rest of their sex, have been admitted by stealth to these orgies. The time when the festive ceremony begins

17. A noggin or naggin is a small drinking vessel; a mug or cup (OED).

varies according to circumstances, but it is never earlier than twelve o'clock at night; the joys of a raking pot of tea depending on its being made in secret, and at an unseasonable hour. After a ball, when the more discreet part of the company has departed to rest, a few chosen female spirits, who have footed it till they can foot it no longer, and till the sleepy notes expire under the slurring hand of the musician, retire to a bedchamber, call the favourite maid, who alone is admitted, bid her *put down the kettle*, lock the door, and amidst as much giggling and scrambling as possible, they get round a tea-table, on which all manner of things are huddled together. Then begin mutual railleries and mutual confidences amongst the young ladies, and the faint scream and the loud laugh is heard, and the romping for letters and pocket-books begins, and gentlemen are called by their surnames, or by the general name of fellows! pleasant fellows! charming fellows! odious fellows! abominable fellows! and then all prudish decorums are forgotten, and then we might be convinced how much the satirical poet was mistaken when he said,

"There is no woman where there's no reserve."

The merit of the original idea of a raking pot of tea evidently belongs to the washerwoman and the laundry-maid. But why should not we have *Low life above stairs* as well as *High life below stairs*?

Page 39. *We gained the day by this piece of honesty.*—In a dispute which occurred some years ago in Ireland, between Mr. E. and Mr. M., about the boundaries of a farm, an old tenant of Mr. M.'s cut a *sod* from Mr. M.'s land, and inserted it in a spot prepared for its reception in Mr. E.'s land; so nicely was it inserted, that no eye could detect the junction of the grass. The old man, who was to give his evidence as to the property, stood upon the inserted sod when the *viewers* came, and swore that the ground he *then stood upon* belonged to his landlord, Mr. M.

The Editor had flattered himself that the ingenious contrivance which Thady records, and the similar subterfuge of this old Irishman, in the dispute concerning boundaries, were instances of '*cuteness* unparalleled in all but Irish story: an English friend, however, has just mortified the Editor's national vanity by an account of the following custom, which prevails in part of Shropshire. It is discreditable for women to appear abroad after the birth of their children till they have been *churched*.¹⁸ To avoid this reproach, and at the

18. "Formally presented at church" (OED).

same time to enjoy the pleasure of gadding,¹⁹ whenever a woman goes abroad before she has been to church, she takes a tile from the roof of her house, and puts it upon her head: wearing this panoply²⁰ all the time she pays her visits, her conscience is perfectly at ease; for she can afterwards safely declare to the clergyman, that she “has never been from under her own roof till she came to be churchied.”

Page 40. *Carton, or half carton*.—Thady means cartron, or half cartron. “According to the old record in the black book of Dublin, a *cantred* is said to contain 30 *villatas terras*, which are also called *quarters* of land (quarterons, *cartrons*); every one of which quarters must contain so much ground as will pasture 400 cows, and 17 ploughlands. A knight’s fee was composed of 8 hydes, which amount to 160 acres, and that is generally deemed about a *plough-land*.”

The Editor was favoured by a learned friend with the above extract, from a MS. of Lord Totness’s in the Lambeth library.

Page 54. *Wake*.—A wake in England means a festival held upon the anniversary of the saint of the parish. At these wakes, rustic games, rustic conviviality, and rustic courtship, are pursued with all the ardour and all the appetite which accompany such pleasures as occur but seldom. In Ireland a wake is a midnight meeting, held professedly for the indulgence of holy sorrow, but usually it is converted into orgies of unholy joy. When an Irish man or woman of the lower order dies, the straw which composed the bed, whether it has been contained in a bag to form a mattress, or simply spread upon the earthen floor, is immediately taken out of the house, and burned before the cabin door, the family at the same time setting up the death howl. The ears and eyes of the neighbours being thus alarmed, they flock to the house of the deceased, and by their vociferous sympathy excite and at the same time soothe the sorrows of the family.

It is curious to observe how good and bad are mingled in human institutions. In countries which were thinly inhabited, this custom prevented private attempts against the lives of individuals, and formed a kind of coroner’s inquest upon the body which had recently expired, and burning the straw upon which the sick man lay became a simple preservative against infection. At night the dead

19. Wandering.

20. “Complete armour for spiritual or mental warfare” (OED).

body is waked, that is to say, all the friends and neighbours of the deceased collect in a barn or stable, where the corpse is laid upon some boards, or an unhinged door, supported upon stools, the face exposed, the rest of the body covered with a white sheet. Round the body are stuck in brass candlesticks, which have been borrowed perhaps at five miles' distance, as many candles as the poor person can beg or borrow, observing always to have an odd number. Pipes and tobacco are first distributed, and then, according to the *ability* of the deceased, cakes and ale, and sometimes whiskey, are *dealt* to the company:

“Deal on, deal on, my merry men all,
Deal on your cakes and your wine,
For whatever is dealt at her funeral to-day
Shall be dealt to-morrow at mine.”

After a fit of universal sorrow, and the comfort of a universal dram, the scandal of the neighbourhood, as in higher circles, occupies the company. The young lads and lasses romp with one another, and when the father and mothers are at last overcome with sleep and whiskey (*vino et somno*), the youth become more enterprising, and are frequently successful. It is said, that more matches are made at wakes than at weddings.

Page 57. *Kilt*.—This word frequently occurs in the preceding pages, where it means not *killed*, but much *hurt*. In Ireland, not only cowards, but the brave “die many times before their death.”—There *killing is no murder*.

Maria Edgeworth's Notes to *Castle Rackrent*

i. The cloak, or mantle, as described by Thady, is of high antiquity. Spencer, in his "View of the State of Ireland," proves that it is not, as some have imagined, peculiarly derived from the Scythians, but that "most nations of the world anciently used the mantle; for the Jews used it, as you may read of Elias's mantle, &c.; the Chaldees also used it, as you may read in Diodorus; the Egyptians likewise used it, as you may read in Herodotus, and may be gathered by the description of Berenice, in the Greek Commentary upon Callimachus; the Greeks also used it anciently, as appeared by Venus's mantle lined with stars, though afterwards they changed the form thereof into their cloaks, called Pallai, as some of the Irish also use: and the ancient Latins and Romans used it, as you may read in Virgil, who was a very great antiquary, that Evander, when Æneas came to him at his feast, did entertain and feast him sitting on the ground, and lying on mantles: insomuch that he useth the very word mantile for a mantle,

‘—Humi mantilia sternunt:’

so that it seemeth that the mantle was a general habit to most nations, and not proper to the Scythians only."

Spencer knew the convenience of the said mantle, as housing, bedding, and clothing.

"*Iren.* Because the commodity doth not countervail the discommodity; for the inconveniences which thereby do arise are much more many; for it is a fit house for an outlaw, a meet bed for a rebel, and an apt cloak for a thief. First, the outlaw being for his many crimes and villanies, banished from the towns and houses of honest men, and wandering in wastes places, far from danger of law, maketh his mantle his house, and under it covereth himself from the wrath of Heaven, from the offence of the earth, and from the sight of men. When it raineth, it is his pent-house; when it bloweth, it is his tent; when it freezeth it is his tabernacle. In summer he can wear it

loose; in winter he can wrap it close; at all times he can use it; never heavy, never cumbersome. Likewise for a rebel it is as serviceable; for in this war that he maketh (if at least it deserves the name of war), when he still flieth from his foe, and lurketh in the *thick woods* (*this should be black bogs*) and straight passages waiting for advantages, it is his bed, yea, and almost his household stuff.”*

*[Edmund Spenser (1552–1599), *A View of the Present State of Ireland* (1596); in this work, Spenser suggests the difficulty the English have in truly understanding the Irish. He allows his characters Exodus and Irenius to articulate several of the views of Ireland held by the English in the sixteenth century through their descriptions of the cloak, views that, according to Marilyn Butler, “express deeply divided and old English responses to the Irish—sometimes an ancient, romantic, learned people, with an infinitely seductive history; at other times beggars and outcasts, thieves and murderers” (PCR, 17).]

ii. These fairy-mounts are called ant-hills in England. They are held in high reverence by the common people in Ireland. A gentleman, who in laying out his lawn had occasion to level one of these hillocks, could not prevail upon any of his labourers to begin the ominous work. He was obliged to take a *loy* from one of their reluctant hands, and began the attack himself. The labourers agreed, that the vengeance of the fairies would fall upon the head of the presumptuous mortal, who first disturbed them in their retreat.

iii. The Banshee is a species of aristocratic fairy, who, in the shape of a little hideous old woman, has been known to appear, and heard to sing in a mournful supernatural voice under the windows of great houses, to warn the family that some of them are soon to die. In the last century every great family in Ireland had a banshee, who attended regularly; but latterly their visits and songs have been discontinued.

iv. *Childer*: this is the manner in which many of Thady’s rank, and others in Ireland, *formerly* pronounced the word *children*.

v. *Middle men*.—There was a class of men termed middle men in Ireland, who took large farms on long leases from gentlemen of landed property, and set the land again in small portions to the poor, as under-tenants, at exorbitant rents. The *head landlord*, as he *was* called, seldom saw his *under-tenants*; but if he could not get the *middle man* to

pay him his rent punctually, he *went to his land, and drove the land for his rent*, that is to say, he sent his steward or bailiff, or driver, to the land to seize the cattle, hay, corn, flax, oats, or potatoes, belonging to the under-tenants, and proceeded to sell these for his rents: it sometimes happened that these unfortunate tenants paid their rent twice over, once to the *middle man*, and once to the *head landlord*.

The characteristics of a middle man *were*, servility to his superiors, and tyranny towards his inferiors: the poor detested this race of beings. In speaking to them, however, they always used the most abject language, and the most humble tone and posture.—“*Please your honour; and please your honour’s honour,*” they knew must be repeated as a charm at the beginning and end of every equivocating, exculpatory, or supplicatory sentence; and they were much more alert in doffing their caps to these new men, than to those of what they call *good old families*. A witty carpenter once termed these middle men *journeymen gentlemen*.

vi. This part of the history of the Rackrent family can scarcely be thought credible; but in justice to honest Thady, it is hoped the reader will recollect the history of the celebrated Lady Cathcart’s conjugal imprisonment.—The editor was acquainted with Colonel M’Guire, Lady Cathcart’s husband; he has lately seen and questioned the maid-servant who lived with Colonel M’Guire during the time of Lady Cathcart’s imprisonment. Her ladyship was locked up in her own house for many years; during which period her husband was visited by the neighbouring gentry, and it was his regular custom at dinner to send his compliments to Lady Cathcart, informing her that the company had the honour to drink her ladyship’s health, and begging to know whether there was any thing at table that she would like to eat? The answer was always, “Lady Cathcart’s compliments, and she has every thing she wants.” An instance of honesty in a poor Irish woman deserves to be recorded:—Lady Cathcart had some remarkably fine diamonds, which she had concealed from her husband, and which she was anxious to get out of the house, lest he should discover them. She had neither servant nor friend to whom she could entrust them; but she had observed a poor beggar woman, who used to come to the house; she spoke to her from the window of the room in which she was confined; the woman promised to do what she desired, and Lady Cathcart threw a parcel, containing the jewels, to her. The poor woman carried them to the person to whom they were directed; and several years afterwards, when Lady Cathcart recovered her liberty, she received her diamonds safely.

At Colonel M'Guire's death her ladyship was released. The editor, within this year, saw the gentleman who accompanied her to England after her husband's death. When she first was told of his death, she imagined that the news was not true, and that it was told only with an intention of deceiving her. At his death she had scarcely clothes sufficient to cover her; she wore a red wig, looked scared, and her understanding seemed stupified; she said that she scarcely knew one human creature from another; her imprisonment lasted above twenty years. These circumstances may appear strange to an English reader; but there is no danger in the present times, that any individual should exercise such tyranny as Colonel M'Guire's with impunity, the power being now all in the hands of government, and there being no possibility of obtaining from parliament an act of indemnity for any cruelties.

vii. *Boo! boo!* an exclamation equivalent to *pshaw* or *nonsense*.

viii. *Pin*, read *pen*. It formerly was vulgarly pronounced *pin* in Ireland.

ix. *Her mark*. It was the custom in Ireland for those who could not write to make a cross to stand for their signature, as was formerly the practice of our English monarchs. The Editor inserts the fac-simile of an Irish *mark*, which may hereafter be valuable to a judicious antiquary—

Her
Judy \times M'Quirk
Mark.

In bonds or notes, signed in this manner, a witness is requisite, as the name is frequently written by him or her.

x. *Vows*.—It has been maliciously and unjustly hinted, that the lower classes of the people in Ireland pay but little regard to oaths; yet it is certain that some oaths or vows have great power over their minds. Sometimes they swear they will be revenged on some of their neighbours; this is an oath that they are never known to break. But, what is infinitely more extraordinary and unaccountable, they sometimes make and keep a vow against whiskey; these vows are usually limited to a short time. A woman who has a drunken husband is most fortunate if she can prevail upon him to go to the

priest, and make a vow against whiskey for a year, or a month, or a week, or a day.

xi. *Gossoon*, a little boy—from the French word *garçon*. In most Irish families there *used* to be a barefooted gossoon, who was slave to the cook and the butler, and who in fact, without wages, did all the hard work of the house. Gossoons were always employed as messengers. The Editor has known a gossoon to go on foot, without shoes or stockings, fifty-one English miles between sunrise and sunset.

xii. At St. Patrick's meeting, London, March, 1806, the Duke of Sussex said he had the honour of bearing an Irish title, and, with the permission of the company, he should tell them an anecdote of what he had experienced on his travels. When he was at Rome, he went to visit an Irish seminary, and when they heard who he was, and that he had an Irish title, some of them asked him, "Please your Royal Highness, since you are an Irish peer, will you tell us if you ever trod upon Irish ground?" When he told them he had not, "O then," said one of the order, "you shall soon do so." They then spread some earth, which had been brought from Ireland, on a marble slab, and made him stand upon it.

xiii. This was actually done at an election in Ireland.

xiv. *To put him up*—to put him in gaol.

xv. *My little potatoes*—Thady does not mean, by this expression, that his potatoes were less than other people's, or less than the usual size—*little* is here used only as an Italian diminutive, expressive of fondness.

xvi. *Kith* and *kin*—family or relations. *Kin* from *kind*; *kith* from we know not what.

xvii. Wigs were formerly used instead of brooms in Ireland, for sweeping or dusting tables, stairs, &c. The Editor doubted the fact, till he saw a labourer of the old school sweep down a flight of stairs with his wig; he afterwards put it on his head again with the utmost composure, and said, "Oh, please your honour, it's never a bit the worse."

It must be acknowledged, that these men are not in any danger of catching cold by taking off their wigs occasionally, because they

usually have fine crops of hair growing under their wigs. The wigs are often yellow, and the hair which appears from beneath them black; the wigs are usually too small, and are raised up by the hair beneath, or by the ears of the wearers.

xviii. A wake in England is a meeting avowedly for merriment; in Ireland it is a nocturnal meeting avowedly for the purpose of watching and bewailing the dead; but, in reality, for gossiping and debauchery.

xix. *Shebean-house*, a hedge-alehouse. Shebean properly means weak small-beer, taplash.

xx. At the coronation of one of our monarchs, the king complained of the confusion which happened in the procession. The great officer who presided told his majesty, "That it should not be so next time."*

*[Probably refers to George III, who took the throne in 1760 from his grandfather George II. His trusted advisor, Lord Bute, was by his side, and may be the "great officer" ME refers to here. See J. H. Plumb, *The First Four Georges*, London: Batsford, 1956.]

xxi. *Kilt and smashed*.—Our author is not here guilty of an anti-climax. The mere English reader, from a similarity of sound between the words *kilt* and *killed*, might be induced to suppose that their meanings are similar, yet they are not by any means in Ireland synonymous terms. Thus you may hear a man exclaim, "I'm kilt and murdered!" but he frequently means only that he has received a black eye, or a slight contusion.—*I'm kilt all over* means that he is in a worse state than being simply *kilt*. Thus, *I'm kilt with the cold* is nothing to *I'm kilt all over with the rheumatism*.

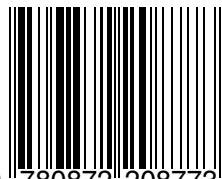
xxii. *The room*—the principal room in the house.

xxiii. *Tester*—sixpence; from the French word *tête*, a head: a piece of silver stamped with a head, which in old French was called "un testion," and which was about the value of an old English sixpence. Tester is used in Shakspeare.

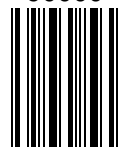
Set in Ireland prior to its achieving legislative independence from Britain in 1782, *Castle Rackrent* tells the story of three generations of an estate-owning family as seen through the eyes—and as told in the voice—of their longtime servant, Thady Quirk, recorded and commented on by an anonymous Editor. This edition of Maria Edgeworth's first novel is based on the 1832 edition, the last revised by her, and includes Susan Kubica Howard's foot-of-the-page notes on the text of the memoir as well as on the notes and glosses the Editor offers "for the information of the *ignorant* English reader." Howard's Introduction situates the novel in its political and historical context and suggests a reading of the novel as Edgeworth's contribution to the discussion of the controversial Act of Union between Ireland and Britain that went into effect immediately after the novel's publication in London in 1800.

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